Alevis and Alevism

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Alevis and Alevism

Transformed Identities

Edited by

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EDITOR'S PREFACE:
BEING AN ALEVI, LIVING ALEVINESS, LEARNING ALEVISM

Once, on a picnic site in the vicinity of Istanbul, I asked a group of Alevis what they associate with Alevilik. While sipping tea in the shadow of a huge tree, they all described what being an Alevi has meant to them. For some it had meant the feeling of being different and inferior, for others it had meant the knowledge of being special. During our conversation, the term Alevilik was given a historical background with tales of persecution and suffering, a socio-political orientation with the addition of ingredients like migration, urbanisation, secularism and socialism, and it was filled with descriptions of traditional ritual practices and apassionate love for Imam Ali. "To understand what Alevilik means to a person", one of them explained, "is to put all these things we have talked about in a bag, shake it well, open it and see how it all comes together. And for each Alevi you ask, and maybe each time you ask the person as well, you'll have to shake the bag again".

This conversation not only illustrates the empirical diversity of Alevi identities, it also provides a good example of the standardised explanations that any researcher studying Alevilik may encounter. What it means to be an Alevi may vary according to personal opinion, but the fundamentals seem to remain the same. The English terms *Alevism* and *Aleviness,* adopted in order to capture these different aspects of Alevilik, cover different theoretical approaches to the study of Alevis as well. Considering oneself Alevi may include a sense of Aleviness that defines personal and collective identities in terms of one or several aspects of Alevilik, but it does not necessarily mean embracing Alevism as a system of beliefs and practices. Thus, living Aleviness and relating ones identity to Alevism are strategies in the identity work of Alevis in general.

According to David Shankland and Atila Çetin, a substantial part of the research conducted on Alevis focuses on the assumption that Alevis have a culture—a well-defined system of beliefs and practices distinguishing Alevis from non-Alevis. They point to the unfortunate fact that this "culture" is often studied in place of other aspects of life, and to challenge this "culturalism", they here present a study of general social change among Alevis migrated to Germany from a village in Turkey. In their article *"Culturalism" and social mobility, or An Alevi village in Germany: initial considerations,* without denying the importance of culture and religion, they focus on empirical research on social mobility through property and profession.

Before establishing Aleviness and Alevism as important factors in the determination of social structures, empirical studies of actual changes within diverse Alevi groups must be conducted. In his article *Blood, Gelin and Love: Changes in Patterns of Alliance in an Alevi Group,* Benoit Fliche studies changes in marriage patterns within a group of Alevis migrated to Ankara from a village in Central Anatolia, and reveals that the religious endogamy characteristic of the Alevi tradition is today challenged by other concerns, such as ethnicity, morality and submission to social order.

Transmission of Alevilik is institutionalised differently within different Alevi communities. The ways in which the younger generation of Alevis are taught the essentials of their cultural and religious traditions is the subject of the contributions of both Hüseyin Türk and Hege Irene Markussen. In his article *Alawism and Concealment: The Unclehood Tradition in the Nusayriye*, Türk analyses recent changes in the "Unclehood Tradition", the vehicle through which esoteric religious knowledge is transferred to the coming generation among Nusayries in the Hatay province of Turkey. The article *Alevi Theology. From Shamanism to Humanism* is based on an empirical study of an Alevi dergah in Istanbul, where Markussen has followed a group of students through their participation in a number of Alevilik and semah courses. By focusing on how Alevism is transmitted as a coherent system of belief, Markussen analyses how these young people live their Aleviness while learning the basics of Alevism.

Due to a lack of extensive ethnographic and historical research, the question of whether the processes of identity formation in Alevi communities are based upon transmission, re-construction, or construction of traditional practices often becomes a matter of scholarly perspective. In his article *Festivals and the Formation of Alevi Identity*, Mark Soileau examines the role in identity formation played by festivals where Alevis come together and share the values constituting their culture. By assuming that Alevi festivals are traditional, in the sense of "the passing down of culture from generation to generation", and that their form is an adaptation of the Alevi cultural heritage to the modern context, he introduces the possibility that contemporary Alevi festivals are continuations of older forms of Alevi worship.

In Elise Massicard's article *Alevism in the 1960's: Social Change and Mobilisation*, we find a clear example of cultural and political mobilisation of Alevism. She provides interesting new material on the Alevi movement in the 1960s, thus establishing that Alevi mobilisation started long before the

revitalisation of "Alevi identity" in the 1990s. The article also focuses on Alevi agents forcing cultural and political change in the name of Alevism—a perspective which is important in order to balance general assumptions that mobilisation or revitalisation of Alevism and Alevi identities has merely been a result of changes in social structures.

Beatrice Hendrich teaches us another important lesson in her article *Alevis in Germany after the 11th of September – caught between a rock and a hard place?* In the aftermath of September 11th, she notices a clear divergence between the reactions of Alevi professionals and lay people. While professional advocates interpreted the attacks within an existing Alevi historical consciousness, the reactions among lay people clearly indicate that living with the awareness of being an Alevi is not a hindrance to the embracing of other identities, like being a Muslim immigrant in German society.

Multiple identities is the main topic in Elin Strand's and Adrian Marsh's article as well. With the examples of *Abdallar* groups in Turkey, they offer a historical perspective on the possibility that these groups may be both Alevi and Gypsies.

* * *

The initial idea for this book derives from a panel on Alevism held at the First World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies in Mainz, Germany in 2002. All the papers in this panel focused on social and cultural changes that had occurred in the environments of Alevi communities. The idea of publishing a volume concentrating on Alevism and social change arose during these presentations and the stimulating discussions that followed each. I would thus like to thank both the speakers and the audience for their inspiring participation. Some of the articles in this volume are based on the papers presented at the conference; other contributors joined in at a later stage. And although the focus of the articles stretches from the study of diverse Alevi groups to analysis of the transmission and mobilization of Alevism, they all share the common theme of change and transformation. Thus, it seemed most appropriate to name this book Alevis and Alevism. Transformed Identities. *I would like to express my gratitude to the authors of the articles, not only for their contributions, but for their patience during the editing process as well. I would also like to thank the Swedish General Consulate in Istanbul for the economic assistance provided both for my participation in the conference and for the preparation of this book.*

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"CULTURALISM" AND SOCIAL MOBILITY OR AN ALEVİ VILLAGE IN GERMANY: INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

David Shankland and Atila Çetin

The material offered here is based not upon a completed research project, not perhaps not even one that is "in progress" in the sense that this phrase implies an established path toward a conclusive result.[1] Rather, it marks an attempt to collect ethnographic data on migrants that will complement a longitudinal study of a community that I have been looking at in Anatolia for nearly fifteen years, and, at the same time, the beginning of a long-term initiative to look at the gradual establishment of the Alevi, Turkish communities in Germany. That the project is also today, still ongoing, means our comments should be considered a series of working notes indicating the different possible angles that may influence the work's design. To give a rough indication of the time scale that we are envisaging, whilst that pilot project (as we shall outline below) took place throughout 2002 and into 2003, we reckon on perhaps five more years of further fairly systematic (albeit perhaps not continuous) research, followed by a final publication only toward the end of the decade. The research team is at present two, myself and a long-term colleague in the field drawn from the Alevi community, Mr Atila Çetin. It has then at present just one "outsider" and one "insider" in its design, who should be judged entirely equal partners in terms of its execution and evaluation. The ideas that I put forward below represent our joint conclusions.

[1]Acknowledgements: This research is supported by the Humboldt Foundation (Germany), the Economic and Social Research Council, and the Arts and Humanities Research Board (UK). We are most grateful for their assistance. I should like to offer my personal thanks also to the Institute for Turkish Language, Culture and History, Bamberg, and its Director, Professor Klaus Kreiser. The ideas expressed in this article represent the joint views of the authors, though David Shankland would like to acknowledge particularly the stimulating input from Professor Chris Hann, who first sparked an interest in this type of approach at the MESA conference in 1994, and extremely helpful discussions with Professor Kreiser as the project was being formulated. Responsibility for its contents naturally remains with the authors. This paper was first given to the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, and we are grateful to those present for their most pertinent advice and comments.

"The Way in"

Just as any researcher instigating a new project, it was naturally incumbent upon us to search for a "way-in", that kernel of an idea that would enable the enquiry to begin, and provide at least an indicative framework with which to structure any results. In this instance, the work of the late Professor Paul Stirling appeared to be particularly appropriate. There are a number of reasons for this. It may be recalled that Stirling was a pioneer in the anthropological study of Anatolia, one who provided an unusually clear and coherent picture of life in a Turkish village as it was in at the end of the 1940s (See Stirling 1964, Hann 1994, Shankland 1994). As the years went by, he maintained contact with the village where he worked, and gradually became fascinated by what he felt was the chance to witness an "industrial revolution" at the very moment of its happening. In part, this took him into a consideration of the wider changes in Turkish government and society, in part too it decided him to concentrate on migration. He made the simple, but I think entirely valid, hypothesis, that by tracing as exhaustively as possible the lives of the members of one particular community over time, it would be possible to discern in a way that is otherwise extremely difficult, their fortunes as industrialisation progressed.

Migration and Social Mobility

Stirling worked on this theme until his death in 1999. He did not use questionnaires, nor indeed tapes, which he felt were not worth the effort in terms of the time it took to transcribe, translate and evaluate. Instead, beginning with a rough template of the issues that he felt were most important, he made intensive visits to the community and collected his data through informal interviews. He was not alone in these visits - as well as a government representative, he was accompanied by several assistants, including in the later stages of the work Dr Emine Incirlioğlu (1994), who has written sensitively about her work on the project.

There is no need, perhaps, to summarise Stirling's conclusions extensively here. He was struck by the importance of using electronic media to compile, sift and present results, and from the outset of the project attempted to commission or utilise software that could be used with his material. Accordingly, though he died before achieving the final publication of his work, many of his conclusions and findings are available on-line, in a site

maintained by the Anthropology Department at the University of Kent.[1] In spite of this, it might be helpful here to highlight a few aspects of his project. Initially, Stirling was pre-occupied by just how thorough and far-reaching the modernisation project in the village had become. He had a clear recollection of his earlier work, and the appallingly difficult conditions of the villagers' lives. Then, in 1948, they were operating at something very close to subsistence agriculture in very awkward and tricky soils to work. Within his lifetime, their lives had become immeasurably richer, even affluent in the sense of adequate comfort, warmth and nourishment. This general change was accompanied by an infrastructural implementation of roads, telephone and electricity that meant that, in many ways, his life in Britain was similar to that in the village. For this reason, he was extremely sharp with those who suggested that the Kemalist project had somehow "failed". On the contrary, he felt that its success was tangible and available for all to see.[2]

With regard to the villagers who had migrated from the community, he made similarly incisive observations. Though they had moved to a number of different cities, including Kayseri, Antalya and Adana, he found that unemployment was low. He suggested further that there opened up very quickly a progressive social differentiation between rich and poor, one that was not present in the original, agricultural setting. In other words, he maintained that his material indicated the widespread presumption (one that, though perhaps with slightly different terminology is still present in much sociological thinking today) that underclasses emerge through poor peasants migrating into the cities and forming a static block confined by their structural position in the economy, quite false. This argument is enormously important when applied to the Turkish case, because it forces us to rethink the idea that the *gecekondu* with which so many Turkish cities are surrounded are in any sense a stable pool of poverty. There are indeed many poor, but many of these poor do succeed in ultimately bettering their position.[3]

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[1] I have not given exact references for all Stirling's papers. Along with a free-access database and his field-notes, they are available to down-load from the web-site: *Paul Stirling's Turkish Village Archives*, URL http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/Stirling/index.html. My comments here are partly based too on a long interview held with Stirling (Shankland 1999) in which he discusses his approach.

[2] See, for instance, the foreword to the essay collection that he edited on Turkish villages (Stirling 1993).

[3] See here the articles on the Kent web-site in general, but also particularly that entitled *Labour Migration and Changes in Anatolia.*

Property and Profession

Whilst Stirling was careful, even scrupulous, to note that the complexity of social life makes all attempts at a causal explanation extremely problematic (see in particular here Stirling 1974) he nevertheless felt confident enough suggest two factors that may be of particular importance in explaining the success of the villagers as they migrate into the larger cities. The first is property. The villagers rarely possessed sufficiently significant sums of capital to purchase a piece of land, or house outright. However, joining the shanty-town communities, they would first occupy a piece of land near a city through erecting a hut or temporary dwelling. Then building on that piece of land, they would construct a much more permanent structure, almost universally, a concrete flat-topped apartment that could have further floors built on. Then, by putting pressure on the local municipality in exchange for votes, they would gradually gain access to utility services and encourage their tracks to be turned into tarmacked roads. Finally, they would equally pressurise the municipality into recognising their title over the land, legalising their situation. This enabled them in turn to construct larger buildings. Those who negotiated this process most successfully then had marketable property that they could sell if they wished to move into a better-established part of the city.

This process relies upon a particular concatenation of circumstances: the respect that, in spite of other widespread upheavals, is paid to individual title over property in Turkey, the existence of powerful local democracies, the weakness of the bureaucracy in the face of political patronage (which means that it is readily open to manipulation by the political parties) and a nation-wide but uneven expansion in utility provision (which creates an extremely competitive market for such services). In the case of the villagers from *Sakaltutan*, the village where Stirling worked, it is facilitated by a further factor. They gradually came to specialise in one particular trade: plastering. This meant that they were able to exchange information about labour markets, rates, and provided informal training to each other within the framework of an existing social network. That trade too, was particularly well chosen, because it contained the possibility of social and professional advancement. A man could, if skilled, courteous and hard-working, build up a good number of customers and himself rise from being a workman, to a team leader, to a contractor and finally perhaps himself become a developer. Thus, a fortuitous choice of profession combined with the wider social circumstances of modern Turkey, Stirling felt was able to explain why rapid migration may lead not to

the emergence of class, but a much more fluid, differential picture of social advancement, in which some may fail but others may succeed.

Methodological Implications

Just as in any other sociological analysis, it is possible to question some aspects of Stirling's work. He offers a rather too cleaned-up picture of life: it is certain that he was aware of the difficulties, corruption, bureaucratic complications and occasionally physical danger that life in Turkey (and of course other places as well) offers, but they do not appear in his written work. Though he was conscious that his work might appear rather blind to gender differences, he did not integrate that realisation fully into the presentation of his results. Again, and most importantly for our project, he did not look at religion at all. The villagers with whom he worked were exclusively Sunni, the majority group in Turkey. It is possible that the results of his analysis would appear rather different if the Alevi, religious minority is taken into consideration. Finally, he looked exclusively at migration within Turkey. He made one brief trip to Germany, but did not look in any detail at the villagers abroad. All this means that, in spite of the intrinsic interest of his research, it is not at all clear to what extent it is generalisable or even applicable in an international setting.

Borrowing Stirling's Model

In spite of these potential difficulties, we felt that there remained advantages in borrowing Stirling's approach as a way to begin our project into investigating the lives of Alevi migrant villagers in Germany. We too, just as did Stirling, have begun to build up a detailed knowledge of just one, specific community in Anatolia. Our project too is concerned with modernisation, social change, and the integration of the village into the outside world. Just as Stirling's community they have, in spite of social upheavals in Turkey as a whole, led reasonably peaceful existences for much of the Republic. Relying on poor, subsistence agriculture, they too have not developed extensive cash cropping but instead rely almost entirely upon migration in order to enter the cash economy. There are therefore, sufficient parallels between my existing research and Stirling's to be able to benefit from his methodology and experience in instigating such a detailed micro-study.

More than this even, there is one paramount factor that decided us to begin with Stirling's approach. He possessed the inestimable advantage that he was not, *per se*, interested in ideologies. Though he was fully aware of the importance of religion, of culture, and of ways to think about our human predicament, he did not regard them as in any way *sui generis*, as categories that could in themselves be studied independently of the wider physical attributes of what it means to be alive. In other words, whilst he was profoundly sceptical of Marxism, he shared its concern with poverty, with the treadmill of everyday, grinding agricultural or working life. Or to restate the point less emotively, he was aware that the villagers were Sunni, were Turkish, male or female, followers of the right or of the left in politics, but did not regard these factors with the same primacy as the fact of their simply being persons who had to cope with the everyday business of being alive.[1]

Culturalism

This pragmatism is of immense importance in the study of the Alevis, which simply put, is increasingly dogged by an insidious labelling that might be termed "culturalism". The wording is perhaps not very important. However, what we mean by this is a process whereby the fact of a community belonging to a particular group becomes the dominant consideration in any description of their society, so much so that scholarship concerning them becomes circular: they are assumed to have something called "Alevi culture", this (and its reformulation, rethinking, discussion, and exploration) becomes the sole focus of the work, which is then published or discussed as an essay on Alevi culture that is intended, by implication, to represent Alevi society more generally. In other words the locus of anthropological fieldwork, at its inception devoted to a multi-variant exploration of social life, has become gradually narrowed until it is aimed at exploring one phenomenon to the exclusion of all others. Any attempt at moving away from this ideal type to looking at the more varied nature of individual experience is equally lost. We do not wish to suggest that "culture" is not important: it is often utterly crucial, and of obvious importance in today's world of uneasy shifting

[1] In this respect, Stirling was very close to the Malinowskian model of anthropology, much closer than his teacher Evans-Pritchard, with whom he had a very uncertain relationship, perhaps indeed in part due to this differing view-point. Whilst Stirling was too sensitive to the use of language to use 'instinct' in any simplistic way, he certainly held (just as Malinowksi taught) that some sort of universal individual biological drive: for comfort, power, sex, shapes societal institutions. Stirling's insistence on investigating where possible all the members of a small community is linked to that Malinowskian pragmatism, and again marks him off from Evans-Pritchard's greater readiness to work with ideal types.

collective identities. However, the challenge for anthropology is to achieve an integrated perception, not simply to ignore all other aspects of social life other than that of culture.

The Alevis

By way of a relevant illustration of this point, we may consider the Alevis, and the way that the study of their community has developed, both nationally and internationally. The Alevis are a minority in modern Turkey, consisting of perhaps 15 per cent (maybe a little more or less) of the country's population. Largely rural, they have for long been characterised by their separation from mainstream urban life. Partly this is undoubtedly because their unorthodox religious opinions led to them being viewed with suspicion, sometimes even persecution by the orthodox majority. Partly, though, it may be explained by the fact that their social organisation is largely predicated upon organising their own affairs as independently as possible from centralised rule. To this end, they have developed a complicated, shifting relationship with the orthodox tenets of religion whereby they do not so much dismiss such orthodox tenets completely as stress that their way is better. Inherent within that alternative "way" is the presumption that certain holy patrilineages (known often as *dede*s) have the right to mediate in disputes within the framework of collective rituals, rituals from which outsiders are excluded. These collective rituals, the specific path that the Alevis follow from the doctrinal point of view, and the inner, quiescent philosophy that accompanies this way of life, are sometimes known collectively by the villagers as "Aleviness", *Alevilik*, and contrasted with *Sunnilik*, "Sunni-ness" by them.

Whilst the Alevis have often been noted in travellers accounts, featured indeed in missionary reports, even mentioned in a novel by Morier (1834) in the early nineteenth century, systematic research into their communities by anthropologists paradoxically grew less, not more at the outset of the Republic. The reasons for this are much more complicated than might appear at first sight - it is not just that the Republic was not particularly enthusiastic about anthropology into minority communities, but also that the emphasis in the modern anthropological world, influenced by the Malinowskian revolution, moved away from south-east Europe and toward Africa and Oceania at just this point in time. Thus, just at the point when anthropology reached

its peak as an investigative discipline, not one major study of the Alevis was conducted.[1]

Instead, interest in the Turkish Alevis in particular revived from within Turkey, where their ready embrace of secularism enabled them to integrate almost seamlessly with the Republican People's Party, causing them in turn to become known by them, and an object of heightened interest. This self-identification with the secular Republic continued, and even intensified with the polarisation of politics, so that particularly during times of heightened religious tension, the Turkish Alevis voted almost entirely for the left. In turn, the rise of urban liberal intellectuals of a radical persuasion, some of whom themselves were Alevi, encouraged the further growth of an indigenous movement interested in the Alevi way of life. This movement intensified with the beginning of migration, both to urban centres within Turkey (and in particular Istanbul), and with the migration of Alevis to Germany, where a similar though perhaps rather slower process of identification of the Alevis with the intellectual radical left has taken place. More recently, and coinciding with the gradual introduction of electronic media, there has been a much more rapid expansion of Alevi studies, with now perhaps some several hundred titles available on the market.

I have simplified a much more complicated historiography, of course. I have not, for example, mentioned the interest in the Alevis that historians of Islamic history, such as Professor Melikoff, have occasionally shown. Nevertheless, I think that the process I have outlined is broadly accurate. One of its consequences is that there is now a very close relationship between those from outside who study the Alevis, and those from within the Alevi movement who are interested in their own society. In some ways this is extremely healthy, and the small research team that constitutes this project is a case in point. Indeed, it mirrors the experience of anthropologists in many parts of the world, who have found far more quickly than they anticipated, that their results, thoughts and conclusions become the object of debate and discussion within the host community.

[1]The early study of the Alevi/Bektashi has net yet been exhaustively quantified, see however, the discussion of these issues in the edited volumes *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Antolia: the Life and Works of FW Hasluck* (Shankland 2004), which looks in particular at these issues through the work of Hasluck at the turn of the century, particularly Karakaya-Stump (2004). The articles by Crowfoot (1900) and Grenard (1904) are perhaps representative of this early period, though see in particular Mélikoff (1998) for a general overview, and the still renowned monograph by Birge (1937).

However, just as any other social process, this may have positive and negative aspects. In this case, it seems as well as being so fruitful, to have encouraged a particular concatenation of western scholarship and indigenous revival that is, ultimately perhaps, not very helpful for an investigative exploration. Researchers from within Turkey are often preoccupied with illustrating the uniqueness of Alevi culture, history or religion, or have overtly political agendas, whilst those from outside fascinated by this revival, have increasingly been caught up with writing about this and little else. In other words, already pre-occupied with "culture" the movement of anthropologists and intellectuals in Europe toward the Alevi "question" has become centred on the public, reaffirmation of "Aleviness" that is encouraged by the indigenous activists, who in turn are both actors and subjects in the research material that is generated.[1]

Why should this be deleterious? This development is not necessarily damaging in itself, but rather it does have highly significant opportunity costs because it permits empirical investigation to become so diminished within the anthropological programme. We have noted above that the Alevi communities' traditional social organisation in Anatolia is not terribly well known. This remains the case today, in spite of the explosion of works about them. Obviously, there are great differences, say, between Alevis from the Aegean, from Van, and from, say Amasya. However, there exists not a single study, not one, that has attempted a synoptic comparison of the differences and similarities in their different styles of life. A more fruitful or important field for anthropological research could hardly be envisaged. And, of course, as modernisation continues, and the traditional reliance upon networks of *dede*s lessens, and as indeed "Alevilik" becomes more codified the various, diverse ways in which fairly isolated societies have experienced Aleviness in the traditional setting will simply be lost.

Yet, whilst we can claim to have no easy answers, from our own reading, and from our experience of travelling throughout Anatolia, we think that a pattern of systematic difference does emerge. Broadly speaking, leaving aside more modern considerations of ethnic or political affiliations, it would seem that the Alevi communities toward the east of Anatolia are less likely to

[1]With regard to anthropology in Turkey as a whole, it would seem possible to identify a shift, whereby previously professional anthropologists in Turkey consisted of persons from established urban families going to look at rural life, whereas at least with regard to Alevi studies, many of those today interested are more self-consciously returning to the society from which their parents or grandparents came, in order to investigate a culture with which they can identify personally. For two important collected volumes that are relevant to these issues, see Olsson et al (1998), and Kehl-Bodrogi et al (1997).

achieve a synthesis with orthodox Islam than those further toward the west, and therefore more likely to regard state-led *imam*s and mosques simply as an intrusion. They are also more likely to maintain a sense of endless renewal of divine inspiration (*keramet*) upon which holy figures may draw, in contrast again with the Alevi communities more toward the west, which sometimes regard firmly all such miraculous intervention as occurring in the past. There are also more technical questions to do with the differing affiliations between different holy leaders and their followers, which though interesting and may yield interesting diverse patterns, are perhaps more appropriate to a discussion between specialists.[1]

The almost complete neglect of this fascinating question is more serious than simply the loss of a diverse historical record that still, just, is available to be researched. The creation of a blanket Alevi identity has served too to push into prominence spokespersons for particular groups, who are not just researchers but also activist members of the community. It is perfectly possible, as Gellner has maintained (1984) that the creation of such historical identities is essential for the development of political consciousness, and in turn proto-nationalist movements. However, this perhaps understandable development has too the unfortunate consequence from the scholarly point of view of obscuring the voice of all those who are content to live in a more anonymous, universal secular life within the modern city, content to be persons within a broad national identity. In the case of the Alevis in Turkey, and indeed in Germany as well, there are certainly large number of individuals who prefer, rather than a revival or even the creation, of a political cultural movement, such a life. Indeed, they may regard its imposition of an Alevi identity as a reaffirmation of the tight social control that is typical of village life, and have no desire whatsoever to reencounter a process of collective labelling that they have succeeded in escaping from.

There is yet another problem. Modern Alevi "culture", viewed as its rituals, music, poetry, articulate humanist philosophy is genuinely very attractive to the western scholarly mind trained to be gentle and thoughtful in all things. Though this way of life was occluded, deliberately concealed from outsiders, in the village setting, it has gradually become the dominant way in which Alevi society has come to represent itself to the outside world. In this guise, it is in its insistence on the separation between the law of the land and culture, profoundly secular. From this, however, it is sometimes maintained

[1] A good introduction to the question of eastern Alevilik lies in the work of Van Bruinessen (2000). For a general introduction, see Andrews (2003).

that the Alevi have *always* been secular, that there is something inherent within their communities that has permitted the separation from authority and ideology, permitting free discussion of both. This is utterly false. Just as we in the west, the Alevi communities had to learn how to become secular. In traditional society, the very basis of the social order lies in the fact that neither the *dede* nor the decision of the community (*toplum*) can be flouted with ease. Both these essential social institutions draw their legitimacy from the distinctive Alevi interpretation of the Islamic canon.

That this link is now less clear, and has certainly weakened (most Alevis abroad are now no longer clearly bound to a *dede* nor to the decisions of a fairly homogenous community) means that Alevi culture has changed profoundly as it becomes reformulated in the migrant setting. To assume that the Alevis have always been secular (as even leading authorities on the Turkish issue have maintained on occasion in conversation) is simply to mistake the volatility, and the dynamism of Alevi society. Again, it is the insistence on culture as a category independent of other social considerations such as power and the social order that has led to this mistake being propagated.

We could continue. In sum though, we have identified at least three areas of social life that we believe have been damaged by "culturalism": 1) we believe that there is a comparative pattern in traditional Alevi social organisation, but it can be discerned only with the greatest difficulty in spite of the huge numbers of those now interested in the Alevi issue. 2) That same "culturalism" appears to push all the people into one particular social framework, one that they may possess no desire to be part of 3) An over insistence on "culture" leads to its reification, and has led to a great neglect of the way that Alevi society and its ideas have changed over time, and particularly the way that they have been reformulated (and not simply translated) in the migrant setting.

Susesi: Internal and External Migration

Taking all the above points in mind, we decided to design a project that would begin as simply as we possibly could devise it. To this end, we devised a loose set of questions that would aim at looking at the following broad three areas of social life: the first is broadly speaking demographic. We have attempted to conduct a complete survey of all the households in Germany who

have moved here from the village, either directly, or from other locations in Turkey. This includes demographic information such as age, sex, occupation, and location, and also kinship and marriage links, language acquisition, length of time in Germany, citizenship, periods of unemployment and house ownership. It also attempts, in preliminary fashion, to gain some sense of the household's links with Turkey, and with their fellow villagers. Our second area of interest concerns more the overall context of life in Germany, their geographical and social mobility over time, the patterns of daily social life, of ritual, religion, and interaction with "civil society" associations, or political activity. The final, and most abstract, attempts to gain some more qualitative sense of the experience of the individuals in Germany, not just their integration in a simple way in terms of their being part of the labour market, but also their acceptance (or otherwise) of German society, and some attempt, however rough, at gaining an appreciation of their overall contentness.

This household-based approach, obviously based on Stirling's approach, actually suits the situation of villagers from Susesi, the village that forms the subject of our research, rather well. Very simply, the villagers in Susesi appear to have pursued subsistence agriculture until about the 1950s, with some cash obtained through seasonal labouring on the Black Sea coast. Migration to urban centres began very rarely at about that date, and gradually accelerated throughout the 1960s, and then intensified in the 1970s, and 1980s. The village population reached its peak in the middle-late 1970s. Now, there are many households, perhaps two hundred, in Istanbul as well as more than a hundred in Europe, most of which are in Germany. Those households who have come to Germany tend usually to live in those cities still where the labour placement office located them on their first arrival. They are thus extremely dispersed, and whilst they maintain contact with each other, retain the stable marriage bonds and economic emphasis on the household unit that is characteristic of village life.

Simply summarising statistical results is perhaps rather tedious. Indeed, we are still checking and rechecking our survey results. However, we draw some preliminary conclusions from what, after all, will be a body of empirical data that will form the foundations of our later research material. Extremely roughly, it appears that satisfaction with German society is astonishingly high. Whilst obviously aware of their sense of cultural difference, it was extremely unusual in any part of our work to find anger, or dissatisfaction with Germany as a social entity. Indisputably there are problems for some even most individuals, particular perhaps for adolescents

who become faced with the difficult and even unwelcome necessity of choosing whether their houschold background, or a more obvious "German" culture is most appropriate for them. However, overall there is a dominating sense that regular work, a steady lifestyle and good relations with neighbours leads to better things, and that the above all others, the German nation has (at least until the recent economic slowdown) solved this essential problem.

This finding is important, because however much our later discussions lead to refinements and better identification of those complications which indisputably do exist, it provides immediate setting for the more quantitative data that we have begun to amass. Take, for example, the question of marriage. The Alevis are known as a highly endogamous society, but I have never found this true in any straightforward way. Rather, it seems that the insistence upon stability through a marriage bond leads them to value a spouse from a familiar background: it is not so much the question of "foreigness" but sociability that it is important. This issue is thrown into relief in Germany, because the migrant community here is faced with strong pressure from their relatives in Turkey to take members of the village, who may otherwise find it difficult to gain regular employment. Whilst this sense of duty does prevail still, those in Germany are increasingly attempting to resist such matches, because they believe that where one of a couple is from the village, and the other brought up in Germany, there develops a strong inequality within the relationship that puts enormous strain on the marriage. If this turns out to be a trend that is borne out by the data that we shall collect over the next five years concerning marriages, then it may mean that the vexed political issue of the extent to which those who do not speak German should be permitted to enter the country by marriage will perhaps (at least with regard to the Alevi community) gradually cease to become relevant because the community itself will already attempt to minimise such matches.

Again, this sense of stability impinges upon the question of religion and "civil society". From our preliminary enquiries, it would appear that there are roughly speaking two opposing trends. Simplifying enormously, it appears that the great bulk of the migrants from the village for much of their stay in Germany have not actively sought out regular occasions for worship. They are not personally sceptical, but occasions for the collective ritual celebration of their faith have not been easy to come across for the majority. As against this, in the Alevi community as a whole in Germany, there is a powerful move to create a codified, scriptural form of Aleviness which did not previously exist in the Turkish village setting, one that will provide a suitable

basis for training of school teachers within the German system. This is led by a small number of men, many of whom (though not all) are drawn from *dede* lineages, and channelled through associations dedicated to the maintenance of Alevi culture that operate in many different cities. As this development is at present still taking place, it is not yet clear how the links between religion and society will evolve. It may result in a structural relationship between religion and society that is akin to that in Christianity, or conceivably evolve into one more typical of orthodox, Sunni Islam, in which the rhythm of both individual and collective life is explicitly brought under a sacred rubric.

The situation is gradually evolving, in that the reformulation of religious mores leads to patterns of ritual that are markedly different from those in the village, but my conclusion at present is that the former is more likely. If so, it may help to explain why those who lead the associations have often found it extremely difficult to attract sufficient activists to maintain them. However, this will depend in great part on the situation in Turkey. As the villagers in Germany become separated from their village communities, they are less influenced by its appeals for help, financial and otherwise. Nevertheless, they are extremely worried about the re-Islamification, a re-Islamification that is so markedly evident from the recent elections, and this in turn may serve to provide an impetus to their associations in Germany that otherwise they may have been in danger of losing. In turn, the secularists within the village community in Germany may feel that they need to support the activities of the moderate associations in order to prevent the rise of other, more orthodox strains of thought. The situation, at present so finely balanced, will be one focus of our work in the coming years.[1]

Social Mobility and the Alevis

Turning back now to Stirling's findings, how have they been replicated in the German setting? Certainly, having begun this research I would now be less critical of two of his methodological points. It may be recalled that Stirling did not use cassettes, and in certain respects he appeared to fail to take

[1]The work of the CEM Vakfı, though based in Istanbul, is likely to become highly relevant to this process even in Germany (see, for example, Doğan 2003). Amongst the many emerging studies on the Alevis more widely, the research of Sökefeld (2002, In press) is of great interest, as is the centre on *Ritualdynamik* at the University of Heidelberg. This work in turn includes discussion of important German-based associations, especially the Alevi Federation at Köln. We hope to treat the relationship between the local Alevi associations, and this more overarching Federation in more detail in a separate publication. See also Shankland and Çetin (in press).

women fully into account in his survey. We had hoped to improve in both these regards. However, in both areas we have encountered difficulties. The first is, at present at least, the villagers whilst delighted to talk (and will happily discuss their experiences in Germany for many hours) do not wish to be taped, leaving only a handful who are happy to be recorded in this way. We do not know whether this is merely a question of acquaintance, or whether it reflects a more self-conscious worry concerning their predicament as migrants in a foreign country. It might simply be that in any society, only a certain proportion of the population are comfortable with having their thoughts noted down in such a permanent way. Perhaps Stirling was right in believing that an exhaustive survey mitigates against extensive tape recordings.

Secondly, Stirling decided that he would only take notice of women in his survey when they remained part of village households. In other words, when a woman married, if she left the village population to live with her husband, she left his data-base. However, if a women married into the community, then she entered his records. We had hoped to overcome this, and to trace the daughters of the village who had married outside, but this too is proving extremely difficult. Just as Stirling suggested, the patrilineal organisation of the society makes it extremely difficult to trace lateral links unless they are channelled through a male. Just occasionally, when a man has retained on good terms with his sister, or a father his daughter, we have been able to follow up such connections, but only on occasion. It still remains awkward even to trace the whereabouts of some out-married women in a way that is socially acceptable, and even more so to ask intrusive questions concerning their lives.

With regard to social mobility, perhaps the single most significant of Stirling's findings, there are markedly contrasting results. It will be recalled that Stirling noted two, interlocking trends. The first was social mobility through property, the second through specialisation. Within our results so far, the first of these trends is extremely marked, the second not present at all. It should be explained that the villagers are widely dispersed, living in Berlin in part, but also in Stuttgart, Köln, Augsburg, Köblenz, Essen, München and other cities, towns and even villages. Rather than gradually come together to form a large population in one of these cities, they appear to be settling within their respective diverse locations, often the same that were allocated to them originally by the labour office in the 1960s and 1970s. Just as Stirling suggested, there has emerged a marked economic differentiation between households, but it is reflected not usually through conspicuous success in

business or through promotion within the factory or service industry where they work, rather through making a conscious decision to stay in their present employment and to buy an apartment, perhaps even construct a house. Those who have done so often have made a conscious decision to divert investments from Turkey, where in previous years most money was sent or used to construct buildings, and acknowledge their permanence within Europe. Those who have made the decision to buy property are also those most likely to have at least one, or more, German citizens within their households. Those who have made this step, indeed, are those who express the most satisfaction with their lives within Germany.

Yet, quite unlike the Sunni community that Stirling studied, there is no sign whatsoever of any economic specialisation within the migrant community. We have already noted that many remain with the work, or very similar work, to which they were first allocated. Their means to affluence is a steady job, acceptance of the system where they live, gradually building up good ties with neighbours and creating trust in the workplace. There appears to be no pattern at all as to economic activity other than the majority are in manual or semi-skilled labour, and a few have set up their own business, such as a *büfe* or (in just one case) a failed *dönerci*. Curiously, the one family that appears to have accumulated significant wealth have done so through property: having become estate agents, and now possess substantial family houses.

Conclusion

Here, we have discussed only part of the project. Amongst its aims are to look not just at the migration from the village to Germany, but also at the distribution of the entire village population, whether in Istanbul, Germany or other European cities. We hope that this will not just shed light into a most fascinating period of village history as its people emerge into the modern world, but also on the reasons for the villagers' departure. This too, will enable a much more nuanced picture of the migrants' lives in Germany for, whilst they are gradually becoming more independent, they are influenced by pressure and memories of Turkey, of the village, and of the very significant presence of the village in Istanbul. Even at the outset, however, this approach does seem to suggest once more the viability of a model of exhaustive fieldwork that was first mooted by Malinowski and, albeit at one remove, endorsed by Stirling, however it may need refining as the work continues.

There is one final issue that, as yet, we have been unable to resolve. There are two variables that make the study quite different from Stirling's. The first is that the community he studied are Sunni, and ours Alevi. Secondly, he worked in Turkey, and we have only here discussed the migrants in Germany. If we were to compare Stirling's results with Alevi migration in Turkey, then a quite different pattern would emerge, and the similarities would be enormously less obvious. Whereas he noted a diverse pattern of migration, high employment, and steady social mobility through working in the private sector (just, indeed, as we have found in Germany), the Alevis in Turkey display a steady accumulation of population of only one, highly concentred part of Istanbul, high unemployment, and much more limited social advancement. The one similarity between the German and the Turkish case is that in Turkey too, the Alevi villagers with whom we are familiar have no labour specialisation. Indeed the most usual, almost the only way, for Alevis in Turkey to find advancement is through the civil service or through politics (usually in the Republican People's Party or its successors), and not through the private sector at all.

Any brief explanation for such a phenomenon risks sounding glib, but it would certainly seem possible to consider that much of the pattern of Alevi migration in Turkey accords with the gradual "ghettoisation" of their community through pressure from the Sunni majority, with the (at least in part) secular state providing them with some limited means of advancement. We could then explain their more stable distribution in Germany as a function of the comparative lack of discrimination against them. Why, however, they should in both settings fail to develop economic specialisations in the context of the modern economy remains puzzling. At risk of returning to a rather abstract analysis, it might be that the Weberian assumption of a connection between Puritanism and economic wealth is correct. This would imply, of course, that the Sunni Turkish community in Germany has been conspicuously more successful economically than the Alevis. Anecdotally, there does seem some support for this, but we should be delighted in the future to locate comparative economic statistics with regard to the Alevi and Sunni communities' occupational success in Germany.

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BLOOD, *GELİN* AND LOVE: CHANGES IN PATTERNS OF ALLIANCE IN AN ALEVI GROUP

Benoit Fliche

How to marry when you are a young Alevi living in a *gecekondu* quarter in today's Ankara? This question appears simple; however, it can be a way to understand how alliance patterns have evolved among Alevis after experiencing social changes like urbanisation and migration to Europe.

Contemporary changes in marriage patterns have been analysed by many researchers[1], but there are few works focusing specifically on Alevis[2]. Two reasons can explain this lack of research. The first is mentioned by Bozarslan : "Si... les études de qualité sur l'alévisme comme système de croyance ne manquent guère, les analyses sociologiques et anthropologiques sur la question font en revanche cruellement défaut" (Bozarslan 2000: 80). Since the Alevi revival in the nineties, sociological studies have been concentrated on identity issues, mainly with a political perspective[3]. Within this perspective, Alevi family issues have generally been neglected. The second reason is the mental representations of Alevis among researchers. Bozarslan noticed that Alevis are generally considered as being "liberal" and democratic (Bozarslan 2000: 80). However, they are also characterised by the structure of their religious endogamy (Gökalp 1987: 95)[4]. This link between Aleviness and endogamy seems so strong that researchers "forget" to analyse other aspects of the Alevi family structure.

The lack of research might give us the impression that there have not been any changes in spite of rural migration and urbanization. However, Alevis experienced the same changes as the other inhabitants of Turkey. Thus, it seems relevant to question how this "endogamy", and more generally the representations which structured it, reacted to these social changes. Are the

[1]See for example Stirling and Onaran Incirlioğlu (1996).

[2]This focus is absent, for example, from Rasuly-Paleczek's edited volume (1996), although it gives a good overview on the Turkish family, some fifteen years after the book edited by Kağıtçıbaşı (1982).

[3]See, for example, Olsson et al. (1998) and White and Jongerden (2003).

[4]See Gökalp (1980 and 1994) as well.

representations structuring alliance practices in the village maintained or do they change in new environments? Nowadays, several decades after having left the village of origin, how are the patterns of alliance of these former villagers structured?

Therefore, this article seeks to describe changes of alliance patterns in a Turkish Alevi group, originating from a village in Central Anatolia and settled mainly in a *gecekondu* district in Ankara[1].

Various Endogamies: Aleviness and Ethnicity

The patterns of alliance in the village were first structured by a series of representations. The first one was religious endogamy. According to the civil register of the village, religious endogamy was strict until the 1970s. Religiously exogamic alliances, through kidnapping or escaping, were considered as transgressions, and regulated by a general mobilization of the village in order to recover the "stolen" girl. From the 1970s, we observe a certain easing of this endogamy: the boarders between Sunni and Alevi groups became more blurred. Until the middle of the 1980s however, "passing" from one to the other was possible only in one direction: an Alevi man could marry a Sunni woman, but the reverse was hardly possible. How can we explain this movement of opening and closing?

For some informants who married Sunni women, this opening resulted from "a period of Enlightment" (*aydınlama dönemi*) : "We had May-68 here as well! And that is the reason why in the 1970s, several Alevi men married Sunni women. But afterwards, that was closed again. I met my wife in an association. We were both political activists" (Aslan, Ankara, March 2002). All Alevi men having married Sunni women did not meet their future wives in political organisations, but they very often shared a common ideology. Thus, religious exogamy was moderated by a "political" endogamy[2].

[1]Because of the migration to Europe (Germany and France) and to Ankara, this village disappeared completely in the middle of the 1970's. When I refer to "the time of the village", it is before 1975.

[2]Güneş-Ayata remarks the same political endogamy among Alevis (1996: 103).

In certain cases of tension, the wife's orthodoxy may be stigmatized, for example by being called "the girl of Yezid[1]" (the girl of a traitor). However, these Sunni women are integrated in the family without many difficulties and these unions are relatively well accepted by Alevis. This acceptance is based on representations of the body and transmission of identity. Aleviness is inherited by blood; only the descendant of Alevis can be an Alevi and conversion is impossible. This biological representation of Aleviness is linked to the representations of *soy* (lineage): the father passes on identity to the child; the mother is only the feeder receptacle[2]. Thus, exogamic practices are accepted when the husband is Alevi because the cultural, religious and physiological identities of the children are believed to be inherited from the father's side. An Alevi father will therefore transmit Aleviness to his children even if his wife is not Alevi. The opposite situation is considered a scandal.

Religious endogamy thus remains stable; most of the young people questioned were not ready to cross the religious border: "My wife will be Alevi. It cannot be otherwise. We must share the same culture" a young man answered, who however flirted with a Sunni girl (Ankara, August 2000).

Before migration, within the framework of a common religious obedience, patterns of alliance were also structured by "ethnicity". The informants define themselves as *Türkmen* (Turcoman). They hardly agreed to give their daughters to a Kurd, but the inverse case was not problematic, for the same reasons of "transmission of identity" mentioned above. Contrary to the Kurds, Turks were regarded as possible partners of exchange, even if elder people clearly expressed their preference for alliances with *Türkmen* (Turcoman). Ethnic groups are still important nowadays, even though they influence the patterns of alliance less than before. Kurds still have a bad reputation of being brutal with their wives, uncivilized and wild, but the difference between Turks and *Türkmen* (Turcoman) has lost much of its pertinence for young people.

[1]Yezid was the son of Muaviye, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty. This caliph supposedly killed Hüseyin (or ordered the destruction of Ali's family) in Kerbela in 680. He is abhorred by the Muslims, and with stronger reason by Shiites and Alevis, for which he symbolises treachery.

[2]I refer to Delaney (1991) on the representations of the body. Men were connected to creation, the seed generating capacity, whereas women were comparable with the ground and the fields.

Representations concerning the Family

The patterns of alliance are also structured by a series of representations concerning the family. Marriage is a social obligation, but also a religious requirement, a command from God. Many informants consider those who would like to escape from marriage anti-social. In the same way, divorce is decried. It is often considered to be the sign of degeneration of the family institution and the loss of moral values. It is regarded as a "modern" evil imported from "the West". Two types of families are opposed in the representations: the "de-structured" European family on the one side, and the Turkish "structured", solid and stable family on the other side. This opposition is often the background for great discussions on the degeneration of Europe:

> In Europe, the family is completely degenerated. Have you seen the divorce rates? Here, it is not like that. There are only few divorces. And then, look at the rate of abortion in Europe. Everyone aborts in Europe. Is it normal? Young people start to have sexual intercourse at the age of twelve. Is it normal? No... No... The Turkish family is stable. You know who the father and mother of the children are (Can, Ankara, February 2002).

For some informants, the stability of the family constitutes the power of the Turks, both in Turkey and among the Turkish migrants abroad:

> In twenty years, there will be more Turks than French in France. You know why? Because we have many children. You don't. We still have a solid conception of the family. We don't like divorced families like you, the French. Divorce hardly exists in Turkey. Turkish families are still structured. We don't want single-parent families (Ali, Ankara, July 2001).

In this comment, divorce is regarded as a sign of degeneration. However, one should not believe that divorce does not, or even, did not exist in Turkey. Even if they were socially sanctioned in the village, divorces and repudiations were not negligible. Wives could be repudiated due to sterility, which often led to rupture of the link between the two families. Today, divorce is a reality, but it is very difficult to say if it is more frequent than before. However, the perception remains that divorce is more frequent and easier nowadays, and the fear of divorce has increased considerably over the last fifteen years. This fear is reinforced by the social importance of virginity, which might make it difficult for a divorced woman to remarry.

The increased possibility of divorce influences the way in which alliances are passed today. In the village, to prevent divorce, the villagers preferred brides *(gelin)* who were already known, or about whom reliable information could be gathered. Does this mean that they married only with relatives? To marry within the family was also risky: a possible conflict or divorce bore the danger of rupturing a strong alliance within the extended family. Since the climate was not suitable for agriculture, the tools rudimentary, and the fields quite bad, family solidarity was crucial: in this context, marriage between cousins could put this solidarity in danger. This is the reason why there were few marriages between cousins before urban migration. Marriages inside the lineage were very few: a more distant daughter-in-law was preferred. Because the bride-price *(başlık)* increases with social distance, it was more expensive, but it had the advantage of not endangering the unity of the extended family. This fear of the rupture of family unity is still present nowadays:

> It is always better to marry someone with whom one does not have too many bonds. After, if there is a divorce, it is better. The relations are finished. We won't see this family again and that's all! Whereas if it is in the family, then... It is a pity. We dispute and the friendship relation is finished. No... It is better to marry someone outside the family (Nazik, Ankara, April 2002).

But to marry a completely unknown woman introduces another obstacle: not knowing her character induces a larger uncertainty about the success of the union. Thus the appropriate distance should be found — neither too close, nor too far. How, then, to find "the right *gelin*"?

Patterns Structured by Representations of the Gelin

What are the criteria for choosing a bride? We can distinguish physical criteria, with representations related to the body, and moral criteria, with representations related mainly to the education of the future wife.

To choose a bride, the physical is fundamental, since it is on appearance that the young man decides to see the girl again (and vice versa). However, the first decision is carried out by the mothers. In the village, mothers took advantage of the *hamam* to examine whether the girl had any physical defects. Nowadays, the mothers can only examine the external appearance:

> She must be "normal". But they must look like each other. If he is small and she is tall, it is not good. If he is slim and she is large, it is not good. It's the same thing with hair. But it is not the most important. It is necessary that he likes her (Cennet, Ankara, July 2001).

The "phenotype" is not enough. It is also necessary to consider the "genotypic" popular representations. Representations of the body and blood also determine the choice of the bride. The information campaigns by the Turkish government against endogamy on radio and television in the seventies were effective, and everyone is now afraid of handicapped *(sakat)* children (Sirman 1990: 35). Family endogamy is thus considered dangerous:

> Before, in the village, we did not know that close marriages were bad. Now we know. We are careful so that the spouses are not too close. Because it causes sick children afterwards. For example, the son of our neighbours is handicapped. It is because they married between cousins. They are too close. (Durak, Ankara, september 2001).

The impact of media thus modified the perceptions of the body. Here, it is necessary to distinguish between women educated in the village, and those educated in the city. Fifty year-old women, knowing little or nothing about reading and writing, having grown up in the village, absorbed the information provided by the Turkish state, but interpreted it differently. An informant, seeking a wife for her son, had decided to marry him with his paternal aunt's *(hala)* daughter. She justified her choice by asserting that the girl of a paternal aunt does not represent a consanguinity problem: "But no, they are not close. They are not close, because the fathers are different. The father of this girl comes from far away, from another village. So, there is no problem" . On the other hand, she finds that the parallel patrilineal cousin presents a proximity to be avoided: "Here, the fathers are brothers. They are too close. That can give abnormal children" (Cennet, Ankara, July 2001). The girl of the maternal uncle *(dayı)* also represents a certain proximity, since the father of the potential wife "does not come from far-away": he is the husband's maternal uncle. But that remains not as close as the girl of the paternal uncle *(amca)*. On the other hand, the girl of the maternal aunt *(teyze)* is in the same category as the girl of *hala*. The rule of classification is simple: if the fathers are close, the children are close too. We find here a confirmation of the representation according to which the identity is transmitted by the fathers. As for the mothers, they are considered not to transmit "genetic" characters (Delaney 1991). Thus, for this woman and others of her generation, there are cousins who are "closer" than others, and not all kinds of cousin marriages are avoided.

For those of the informants who went to college, the girls of *dayı*, of *amca*, of *teyze* or of *hala* represent the same degree of proximity. On the other hand, young female informants who were educated in the village showed the same organizing principle: the closer the fathers are, the closer are the children. Thus, these representations of the "inherited body" result from a number of representations, some maintained from the time of the village, others, like the information provided by the authorities, presented by the media.

In addition to these biological criteria, the bride must also meet requirements of being morally well educated. A housewife is not only a perfect master of the house, she must also show her submission to the social order. During the time of the village, expectations regarding the daughter-in-law were clear: she had to give birth to a male child in order to secure the lineage, and she had to provide household labour. Because of this, the selection of the girl was the primary concern of the mother. As many informants pointed out, the interest of the mother was initially to find a daughter-in-law who could function as a maid. As long as the young couple lived with the husband's family, the bride remained under the orders of her mother-in-law *(kayınvalide)*. This cohabitation was not easy: work was hard and the relations with the mother-in-law were often tense.

The requirements regarding the bride, which often resulted in hardness of the mother-in-law towards her, reinforced the preference for relatives (*akraba*). The information about her character and qualities as labour force was thus more easily accessible[1].

Nowadays, the bride's "submission" to certain moral criteria remains crucial. Even though she is no longer expected to be an obliging worker, the mothers-in-law are still looking for wives who are able to take care of their house. This criterion is extremely significant, and not only for the mothers. The husbands-to-be are also very attentive. It was from the male informants that I often heard the proverb "it is the female bird that makes the nest" (*yuvayı yapan dişi kuş*). This representation of the woman as a housewife is so significant that it structures not only the patterns of alliance in Turkey, but also in Europe. It is indeed one of the reasons why young Turks in Europe choose to marry girls from Turkey, even if there is an available "matrimonial

[1]About the evolution of the criteria for choosing a bride in rural Central Anatolia, see Onaran Incirlioğlu (1993).

market" in Europe. The majority of the young male informants living in Europe preferred to look for a wife in Ankara[1]:

> I will confess that I did not want to marry a Turk who grew up in France. Because of her behaviour, her clothes, that would not have been good! It would have been difficult! In Europe, the girls lose the respect for the family, the compliance of the rules of life. They are accustomed like "Frenchwomen", they are accustomed to the lifestyle of the French. But in Turkey, they are used to the Turkish lifestyle. For my wife, it is not total submission. But... But there are things which she must do. Nobody will see me cooking, only if my wife is not at home. If my wife is at home, she'll cook the meals for me. Returning from work, I won't do the housework! Whereas I have cousins who married Turkish girls in France. When they return from work in the evening, the woman is here, and the housework isn't done... Then, that! That... That hurts me! (Ibrahim, Narbonne, February 1999).

The mothers living in Europe entirely share this point of view. "I don't want a bride from France. No, I don't want. Because, in France, women think like men. They think they're like men. Here, in Turkey, the women do not think like men. They are humbler", explained a mother looking for a wife for her son who was brought up in France (Ankara, April 2002). Sometimes we can find the same reasoning among young people living in Ankara, but for them it is the women born in Ankara who are not suitable as wives:

> I do not want a too independent woman. For you, a Frenchman, it is ok. But for me, I don't find that OK. If we go to the sea, we'll go together, not separately. But even here in Ankara, the women are too free. I don't want a woman from Ankara. I prefer a villager. (Veli, Ankara, April 2002).

The brides from Turkey are more submissive, but a bride from Europe offers other advantages: marriage is indeed the only remaining means to migrate. Many young men marry to leave for Europe. Their situation, however, is not easy: upon arrival they find themselves in difficult conditions, similar to that of *içgüvey*[2], and, compared to their cousins who grew up in

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[1] I did not find any case of bigamy like Autant observed. She explains the cases of bigamy as attempts by the young men to reconcile the opposites: With a Turkish woman they maintain a certain psychological and material safety while at the same time living in a relationship with a "Frenchwoman": A stable relationship with another, more "Western" design (Autant 2002: 174).

[2] The *içgüvey* is a man who, after marriage, has to live in his father-in-law's house. Coming from more modest conditions than his wife, his situation is far from enviable. He has to wait until the death of his father-in-law in order to become the head of the family, and before that, he is discredited by being the last to be seated for coffee, the last to enter the mosque, etc (Cuisenier 1965: 80).

France, they have less control of their wives, who have a perfect command of the language of the country and who also have work. Their husbands are initially completely dependent on them, and they must therefore obey their will. Marrying a Turk from Turkey allows the young women from France a significant freedom. Besides, it is interesting to see, nowadays, that the divorce rate increases considerably among these young couples of Turkish origin in France. Are these young Turkish women in a situation similar to that of North African girls who can find husbands neither in France nor in North Africa, thus entering a kind of "matrimonial desert" (Flanquart 1999)? Turkish migrants in France could easily find themselves in the same situation, but let us note that the situation is not completely similar: the French passport of a girl still remains a great attraction. In addition, these girls, even if they often appear "too free", are also socialized like their cousins from Turkey. Like them, they know that their marriage implies submission to certain social standards, such as, for example, the protection of virginity (*bekaret*).

Representations related to Moral Order: Virginity

Virginity remains indeed very significant: it symbolizes the successful socialization of the girl. With due respect to those who see Turkey only through the prism of the districts of Beyoğlu, Cihangir or Bağdat Avenue, virginity constitutes a cardinal virtue for women as for men, independent of their level of education and their political ideas (Sirman 1998: 61). A young Alevi woman studying at Middle East Technical University[1], considered to be one of the best and most liberal universities in Turkey[2], explains how the significance of virginity is divided between two programs of truth[3]: her feminist ideology on the one side and her family education on the other:

> Virginity? Of course, that it is significant. And even for the students. I have a girlfriend who remained four years with the same guy. They ended up sleeping together. But then they separated. My girlfriend became depressed. Not because they had separated, but because she had lost her virginity. I have another friend who went through the same thing. But now,

[1] *Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi* (ODTÜ) One of the best public universities in Turkey, where the teaching language is English.

[2] In Ankara, universities were described to me by several students, distributed according to a "morality-excellence" scale: the greater the excellence of the university, the lower its morality; conversely, as its excellence decreases, its morality goes up.

[3] A truth's program is a concept of the historian Veyne. It is a unity of propositions which is considered by the agents to be the truth (Veyne 1983).

> she sleeps with everyone. Every second month, she has a new boyfriend. She doesn't take care of herself (*kendisine iyi bakmıyor, yani...*). The femininity of the woman resides there, in the virginity. If she loses it prematurely, she is regarded as a whore. And she also regards herself as a whore. Even if she is a feminist. That doesn't change anything. One part of you says it is normal, another part says that you are a whore. (Özge, Ankara, May 2001).

The importance given to virginity is clearly expressed and accepted by the girls, and they consider the boys to have the same opinion. For these young women, there is no doubt that the boys will not accept a deflowered wife, even if they claim the opposite:

> They tell you it isn't important for them. You know, it is necessary to be modern. But when you have an argument, he will remind you: "The day I took you, you were not a virgin!". He will never forget. There will be always something which will embarrass him. (Sevgi, Ankara, December 2000).

Indeed, some men live this confrontation between two programs of truth: the first, modern and liberal, and the second, traditional:

> In fact, virginity, it is for them (the women) that it is important. But for young men, now, it doesn't matter anymore. If it is significant, it is because of the family, because of the ceremony of the "handkerchief", you know... it is for the old men that it is significant. But young people... But you know, it is like a car. It is better to have a new car which was never used before, no? (Ali, Ankara, August 2001).

For the majority of the young informants, their wives must be virgin when they marry:

> Virginity is always significant. Good, of course now, girls leave to study, they leave their families, they have a relation with a boy... It is natural. But for us, that still remains significant. I want my wife to be a virgin. It is a question of virility. I would not stand the idea that she did that before with someone else. She must be a virgin. It is in my culture, I saw it in films or I heard it when we spoke about it in the family. It is a question of virility. You know, we live 90 % like our parents. I think like them... You understand, the man is afraid that she can compare. The man is afraid if she knew a guy before him. She can compare. It is necessary to be the first and... the last. With my wife, I want to be the first and the last. It is obliged. It is for that. I do not want her to have had flirts before. I do not want a whore. If she did it once, she can make it again afterwards. (Hüseyin, Ankara, August 2001).

The problem does not reside only in fear of comparison. It also rests on the woman's capacity to transgress the prohibition. A girl who has crossed the border can easily cross it again. She is sufficiently "strong" to be unfaithful to her husband. She is therefore too dangerous to marry. A wife must demonstrate submission to the social standards because her virginity not only represents the honour of the family, but also obedience to the social rules and acceptance of her role in safeguarding the virility of her husband.

This is symbolized by the red ribbon which surrounds the waist of the bride with her white dress. Red is the symbol of blood, but also of virginity. In the villages, the wedding dresses were red. When the Western dress was adopted about forty years ago, virginity was still symbolized by introducing a red element into the white costume, despite the fact that white symbolizes purity and virginity in the Western code. This ribbon is tied by a male member of the family, generally the older brother. This act explicitly signifies to all that the given bride is a virgin, a fact that is confirmed shortly after the wedding night, with the ceremony of a blooded cloth—a ceremony which continues to be significant nowadays in urban environments.

Patterns in Tension

These alliance patterns are structured by the place of love in marriage as well. Here we must distinguish between two sources of the programs of truth. The first one is of village origin, whereas the second one is "Western". In the first, alliance is a matter of reason, whereas in the second, it is a love affair. Two programs of truth thus clash: a "program of reason" and a "romantic program"[1].

Does this mean that Turkish villagers are deprived the feeling of love? Of course not! Turkish novels are full of stories where love is contradicted by social rules. In the village, escapes and kidnappings of girls existed, but even more interesting are the stories about infidelity. Although it required discretion, infidelity remained possible:

> When I was young, once I passed next to the fountain. Durak was there giving water to the animals. He arrived and whistled. There was a house there of a girl who had just married. She heard the whistle, ran out of the

[1]The topic of love feeds a significant musical and cinematographic production, especially in the "arabesk" movement. About "arabesk", see Özbek (1991) and Stokes (1992).

> house and went to get water. I observed them both. I never said anything to anybody, but... everyone knew. It was even said that she had a girl who looked like Durak... And afterwards, he left for Germany and she went to Ankara. (Bektaş, Yozgat, January 2001).

We thus should not look at the rural world as closed in its rules and its concepts of honour (Starr 1978). Admittedly, vendetta was possible; but there was a flexibility related to the rules: even if it was sanctioned, infidelity did not always end in bloodshed. In short, there was both love and passion in the village.

Nevertheless, love hardly determined the practices of alliance. In the village, marriages were "forced". They were concluded without the agreement of the interested parties: "We obeyed our parents, that's all. It was them who decided with whom one was to marry. There was no choice" (Bektaş, Yozgat, May 2000). After migration, this type of marriage received competition from another: the arranged marriage, in which the interested parties were consulted and had the right to refuse, even if the border between forced and arranged marriages was sometimes blurred. The passage of the forced marriage to the arranged marriage occurred at the beginning of the 1980s. Today, the decision-making process still remains mainly in the hands of the parents: their children seldom marry without their assent.

This maintenance of parental authority can be explained by the economic costs of marriage. The relation between land, marriage and economic survival is not relevant any more in the city, since subsistence does not depend on agriculture. Today marriage no longer constitutes a major economic cost, except when arranged as a strategy for migration to Europe. Any young person can have the opportunity, through marriage, to leave for Europe. In this context, the "arranged" marriage is the rule, and the "romantic" marriage remains the exception. The feeling of love is generally not taken into account. It is enough that the promised couple like each other. So, young people often marry someone whom they have barely had time to know, even if that someone happens to be a cousin.

We can be astonished by the passivity of the young married. What is astonishing is that this type of marriage does not seem to be lived like a constraint: young men trust their mother. That undoubtedly explains the lack of emotional value they grant the marriage, which is often experienced only like a rite of passage: "I had the age to marry. Then I asked my mother to find someone for me. I went several times to drink tea, to see girls and I found my

wife like that" (Mehmet, Ankara, April 2001), or "My parents told me that I had to marry. I said "OK, you introduce girls to me and I'll choose". In one month, we found a girl" (Ahmet, Ankara, January 2002). These types of answers are rather frequent among young men, and there is an equivalent ease among girls: "You know, my parents started to put pressure on me. I looked around and I took the least ugly" (Ayşe, Ankara, January 2002), or "I was twenty years old. It was necessary that I thought about marrying. Then, Ahmet came. We liked each other. I said OK and we engaged one month later" (Gül, Ankara, January 2002). Here, love seems little called upon as a justification for the union.

The program of "reason" is also clearly dominating in the urban context of contemporary Ankara. As many informants, both young and older, often reminded me, love marriages are rarely initiated. Marriages "of reason" are preferred because, like a proverb says, "the eye of the single is that of a blind person" (*bekar gözü, kör gözü*):

> That's why the celibate person should be guided because he does not know what is appropriate for him. Thus, arranged marriages are preferred. But for us Turks, it is not like for you. For us, it is not love which is significant. Love comes afterwards. Or it does not come at all. But it is not important. What is significant is logic. We are logical and our marriages are logical, too. They are marriages of convenience (*mantık evliliği*). [That] is the reason why they are solid. (Ali, Ankara, September 2001).

Therefore, the alliance patterns of this particular Alevi group remain structured around representations which are relatively stable. However, this stability is accompanied by slow but powerful changes in the representations, as shown by the increasing fear of divorce. In spite of the continued importance of virginity, and the representation of the stable family, these patterns are in tension, which can be observed through the confrontation between the marriage of reason and the romantic one. But the most significant change is the end of the forced marriage and the increased importance of the children's desire.

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ALAWISM AND CONCEALMENT: THE UNCLEHOOD TRADITION IN THE NUSAYRIYE

Hüseyin Türk

Introduction

Hatay, a southern province of Turkey, is one of several regions where people with different cultures have been living for ages. It has been established through findings from excavations conducted in the region that a number of different cultures have existed in Hatay ever since the Palaeolithic period. Groups from different ethnic roots and religions still live in Hatay and one of them is the *Nusayries*.

Nusayries live in Lebanon, Syria and the southern provinces of Turkey, including Adana, Mersin and particularly Hatay (Olsson 1996: 216). They are one among several religious and ethnic groups living in Turkey, and they adhere to a particular sect, which keep the deeper understandings and practices secret from outsiders. The most distingishing features of *Nusayriye* are: deification of Imam Ali, practice of shrine beliefs, a belief in Khezr as well as reincarnation, influence from Christianity, and the "Unclehood Tradition" (Türk 2001). This article studies the *Unclehood Tradition* which secures the transfer of secret knowledge between Nusayri generations. The importance of secrecy in the Nusayriye faith, and the role of *bâtin*[1] beliefs in Alawism in general, are discussed as well.

The Unclehood Tradition is not only a means of enculturation, but also a ritual of puberty whereby teenage boys are given religious and social education by their "uncles". The *uncle* is determined by the boy's parents. During the teaching period, the boy stays in the home of his uncle until he has acquired the particular knowledge. The boy has to swear not to reveal the religious knowledge, which is considered to be strictly confidential. Thus, "unclehood", based on the principle of secrecy, appears to be one of the fundamentals of Nusayriye. The boy adopts his teacher as uncle, and the uncle's children as his siblings. Hence, the Unclehood Tradition is not only a

[1] In Islamic mysticism, *bâtin* represents the inner meaning of religious texts or of the existence itself, as opposed to the "apparent" or literal meaning, *zâhir*.

form of social kinship, but also an educational process in which the boy acquires the cultural and religious identity of Nusayriye.

Every religion in the contemporary world has been the subject of research publications and has been informed by comments and considerations appropriate to our time and conditions, yet Alawism has not experienced such an evolution. Few scholarly discussions were made on Alawism until recently, and the ones that were conducted failed to reach the public. However, since the 1990s there has been a boom in publications on *Alevi-Bektaşis*[1], and even the *cem ceremonies* are now held in *cem houses* that are open to the public, the ritual being explained in detail in a number of publications as well. On the other hand, there have been few publications on the Nusayries. Hence, little is known about their form of Alevism, which differs in practice from Alevi-Bektaşi, especially with respect to the continuation of secrecy and esoteric organisation. Records on the Nusayries mostly come from Arabic scripts, which were written in a sociolect including dialect and certain non-literary terms. This sociolect is closely connected to the bâtin essence of the texts. Certain key words and terms in the teachings and rituals of the Nusayriye, taken from bâtin oral traditions, are used as codes functioning to assure the recognition of one by another. Of all these writings, *Kitâbı mecmû* by Kasım-et Teberani is the most important (Turan 1996 and Olsson 1999: 231). Prayers included in this book are taught to the novices both orally and in writing. Apart from handwritten texts, there are only a few published works, and among these the 1990 French publication, *Historie et religion des Nosairis* by René Dussaud— the only monograph on the Nusayries in a European language—is the most distinguished (Olsson 1999: 218). It is in French that the largest number of works has been published on the Nusayries. During their invasion of Syria, the French conducted research on the religious, political and cultural aspects of this community in order to work out political and military policies in the area. There are also other sources in English and Arabic, which have been studied and outlined by Massignon. Among works published in French, the PhD Thesis (1973) by Turan at Sorbon University is very important.[2]

Another important book on the Nusayries is *Kitabü'l Bakura*, published in Beirut in 1863 by Süleyman Üzeni, who became a Christian although he was born Nusayri (Olsson 1999: 227). Most of the Turkish

[1]See Bozkurt (2000: 71—72)

[2]For works about Nusayriye in French, English and Arabic, see Olsson 1999: 219—231, and Massignon 1964: 365—70.

publications on Nusariye based on Üzeni's book, however, are rather speculative in character, as opposed to being grounded in empirical research. In addition, there are a number of religious books written by Nusayris themselves, and research based on field work conducted by Olsson (1999), Türk (2002) and Kesor (2002), reveal some of their secret practices and beliefs.

Methodological Implications

In this article, "field work technique" rather than religious insight was used to study the collective worship; the cem ceremony, as well as the related Unclehood Tradition within Nusayriye.

The author, who had already participated in the Unclehood rituals on earlier occasions, was not allowed entry into the collective worship room, as outsiders are permitted neither to watch nor participate in the rituals. Hence, all information on the collective worship was obtained through guides. These were not individuals asked by the researcher to join the ritual, but enlightened Nusayri believers and religious men who felt that it was time to reveal the secret worship and publicly discuss the secrets of Nusayriye.

Due to the secret practice of the Nusayri tradition and the exclusion of those other than Nusayries from the ritual, information was gathered by reliable guides who attended the rituals and described what they had witnessed in the ceremony. Moreover, interviews were held with people who had previously been to such rituals, but were initially reluctant to supply information due to their secrecy and the closed nature of the community. However, after the aims of the research were described, and assurances of confidentiality given, these individuals changed their minds and became willing participants in the project. It is also important to note that the group leaders with whom we spoke (also known as Sheikhes), denied even the existence of the Unclehood Tradition along with its related practices; in addition the members of the congregation were unable to recall the details of the collective worship rite, or even comprehend the meaning of the prayers in Turkish. Thus, the information gathered from these informants has been complemented with that received from the guides, as well as written records such as those provided by Turan (1996) and Keser (2002).

Secrecy in Alawism and its Causes

Alawism involves two forms of secrecy, originating from two types of motivations. The first finds its roots in the bâtin approach, which prohibits the revelation of beliefs, and is defined as "discretion" or "concealing facts"; the second involves the disguising of worship as a precaution against oppression and attack. These two forms of secrecy are interactive in terms of cause and effect, since Alawies have always been subject to suppression because their interpretation of Islam differs from that of the orthodox Sunni faith. The importance of secrecy can also be attributed to the desire of congregation leaders to maintain their own social status and material profits, thus requiring the creation of a chain of mystery.

The Bâtin Approach and the Nusayriye

Following the separation of Muslims into two branches after the Kerbela events— the Sunni and the Alawi—the Alawis concealed their identities and their religious beliefs and developed the "bâtin approach". Bâtin refers to the mystery of God as well as the essence of his word. Bâtin encompasses not the ordinary chain of objects simply perceptible to the senses, but the hidden periphery of spiritual essence perceivable only by turning to insight (Korkmaz 2000: 466). According to this approach, the Koran and Muslim traditions have, in addition to their apparent meanings, certain intrinsic meanings that can only be reached through contemplation. It is claimed that certain verses in the Koran have secret meanings which can only be understood properly when interpreted differently from their apparent meaning (Hançerlioğlu 1994: 36). One of the significant features of the bâtin faith is the confidential nature of its beliefs, and the fact that its disciples are loyal to each other (Emiroğlu and Aydın 2003: 126). Within the Nusayriye, some teachings have stayed undiscovered due to their intrinsic and mystic nature. It is claimed that the Prophet Muhammed himself adopted secrecy and mysticism and only revealed general convictions. Thus some of the verses in the Koran have secret meanings that differ from their evident meanings within the Sunni approach. Because revelations of secrets could harm the essence of Islam, the mystic practices in Alawi teachings are considered to be a mature way of practising Islam (Et-Tavil 2000: 63,104,147).

Discredited by Sunni groups, the Nusairies have maintained a sect based on the bâtin approach and secret convictions. This, in turn, has caused

the sect to form a closed system of beliefs. Confidence and secrecy are determining factors in the unity of the disciples. The Unclehood Tradition plays a fundamental role in securing the existence of the Nusayriye against severe oppression. This tradition, ensuring the transfer of customs and beliefs, has enabled the Nusayries to supply their trusted male teenagers with their secret teachings on the condition of confidence. Thus, the most important requirement for being a distinguished and qualified Nusayri is the capability of keeping the secret.

On the other hand, pre-Islamic Turkish beliefs have also been important for the secret feature of Alawism. Secrecy played an important role in sacrificial practices as well as other dimensions of life in the Shamanist traditions of ancient Turks. The fact that Shamanism was based on secrecy, and that the secrets were known only to the shamans' disciples, left others without knowledge. Concerning close relations between Alawism and the Ahi Order, the latter, to some extent, affected Alawism. Secrecy was practised so strictly among Ahies that revelation of secrets involved severe sanctions (Birdoğan 1995: 252—253, 227).

In Anatolian Alevism, the teaching of the "four gates", *dört kapı,* and the "forty levels", *kırk makam,* each of which has ten rules, is significant. These teachings occur in the book called "The Decree of Imam Cafer", *Imam Cafer Buyruğu,* written by the sixth Imam, Cafer es-Sadık. The teachings of four gates and forty levels stand for spiritual stages and sub-stages through which disciples have to pass. These gates are namely *Şeriat, Tarikat, Marifet and Hakikat,* each of which has its own attributes and rules. One of the rules in the Şeriat gate is worship, which includes fasting, ritual prayer (the namaz), pilgrimage, alms and so on—each having both apparent and hidden meanings and practices. One of the most important aims of last gate, Hakikat, is to recognise the meaning of existence and to learn the secret of God. In Alawism, the truth is God's secret, and it is only known by confessing faith in God. A religious guide is required to reach the secret of God. This guide is supposed to acquire and adopt the bâtin knowledge of the sect, keeping it a secret while giving misleading knowledge to outsiders.

However, Nusayries do not follow the "four gates" and "forty levels" of Anatolian Alevism. That is mainly because Alawism has thus far continued to exist in several different sects. Following the death of Imam Ali, the Alawies did homage to the twelve Imams descending from the Prophet Muhammed, rather than the Abbasid or Umayyad Chaliphs. In addition to the Koran, the

Alawies carried on their worship in accordance with the book "The Decree of İmam Cafer". However, the Nusayriye do not base their prayers on this book. Following the death of Muhammed el-Mehdi, the twelveth and last of the Imams, the Nusayriye, as distinguished from other Alevis, developed a faith where each of the twelve Imams have their particular Gates, so-called *Bâb*, upon which the faith has to be based.[1]

Muhammed bin Nusayr, the gate of the eleventh Imam Hasan Askeri (846-884), was the founder of the Nusayriye. After him came Hamdan el-Hasibi, who was succeeded by Kasım et-Tebarani, the last of the Nusayriye Sheiks. The Nusayriye belief and worship is based on the esoteric, bâtin knowledge of the book, *Kitâbı mecmû* written by Teberani. That is why Nusayriye appears to be rather different from other kinds of Alevism in its beliefs and prayers.

Over the centuries, the Nusayriye has been divided into several branches. Et-Tavil (2000: 232—333) recognises seven of these branches, but it seems like the most important division is the one between the *Haydaries* and the *Kilazies*. The latter was founded in 1011 by Sheikh Muhammed bin-Kilazi in the village *Kilazi*, located in Antakya. As for the Haydaries, they were established in Antakya as well by sheikh Ali Haydar. Both of these branches appear to have supported the fatalist virtues of the *Gaybies*, yet another branch of the Nusayriye (et-Tavil 2000: 333).

According to Nusayriye, God comes to the world with different faces in each century. Habil, Şit, Yusuf, Yuşa, Asaf, Şem-un and Ali are appearances of God. Imam Ali appears to have been a human being like Prophet Muhammed, but within the bâtin approach he is God himself, and therefore a divine being. God has appeared as a human being through Ali, and there have been seven divine appearances of God as human being. At each appearance,

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[1]The names of the Imams and their Gates are as follows:

Imams	**Their Gates**
1. İmam Ali b.Ebi Talib	Selmân el-Farisi
2. İmam Hasan el-Müctebâ	Kays b.Varaka
3. İmam Hüseyin eş-Şehid	Ruşeyd el-Heceri
4. İmam Ali Zeynulabidin	Abdullah el-Gâlib el Kâbili
5. İmam Muhammed el Bâkır	Yahya b.Muammer b.Ümmittavil es-sumâli
6. İmam Cafer es-Sadık	Cabir b.yezid el Cu'fi
7. İmam Musa el-Kazım	Muhammed b.Ebi Zeyneb el-Kâhili
8. İmam Ali er-Rıdâ	el-Mufaddal b. Ömer
9. İmam Muhammed el-Cevad	Muhammed b.Mufaddal b.Ömer
10. İmam Ali el-Hadi	Ömer b.el Furât
11. İmam Hasan el-Askeri	Muhammed b.Nusayr el-basri en- Nümeyri
12. İmam: Muhammed el-Mehdi	———

two persons, called "name" and "gate", have served God, or within bâtin terminology, the "meaning"[1].

The trinity of Father-Son-Holy Spirit in Christianity is seen in Anatolian Alawism as God-Muhammet-Ali, and in Nusayriye as Ali (Ayn)-Muhammet (Mim)-Selman-ı Farisi (Sin). The three concepts of *Ayn*, *Mim* and *Sin* (AMS) are considered to be the fundamental principle whereby Nusayriye is conceived and understood. The Ayn here stands for "meanings" and denotes Imam Ali, while Mim stands for "the name" denoting Prophet Muhammad. As to Sin, it stands for the word "gate", also called "bab", and denotes Selman-ı Farisi. These three conceptions, existing in most of the Nusayri prayers, have significance as they are the cornerstones of the Nusairies' belief. Although Ali is identified as the last of the seven appearances of God, he holds, according to the bâtin faith, the highest position within the Sufi hierarchy.

In Anatolian Alevism, Ali is seen both as God and as a human being in the trinity of God-Muhammet-Ali. On the other hand, human beings are also thought to have the attributes of God. But this belief, called *enel hakk*, is not to be found in Nusayriye. Nusayries believe in the holiness of certain men who have rendered service to Nusayriye.

Another characteristic feature of Nusayriye is reincarnation. According to Nusayries there are verses about reincarnation in the Koran. They believe that reincarnation enables equality in social life. That is, those who have been living in rather poor conditions in this life, may find themselves in better positions in the next.

Tev'il and *takiyye* are the predominant features of Nusayriye in Hatay. Tev'il is the allegorical interpretation of the Koran and Islamic practices, and takiyye is the act of disguising oneself and concealing ones beliefs—even to the point of misinforming outsiders—when faced with persecution and/or

[1]The seven appearances of God are as follows (See Massignon 1964: 365—370; Serin 1999: 87,109; Karasu 1997: 69).

Meaning (Ayn)	**Name (Mim)**	**Gate (Sin)**
Habil	Adem	Cebrail
Şit	Nuh	Yayil b. Fatin
Yusuf	Yakup	Ham b. Kuş
Yuşa	Musa	Dan b. Aşbavüt
Asaf	Süleyman	Abdullah b. Sim'an
Şem-un Al-Safa	Isa	Rüzbih bin Satr al'a'imma
Ali	Muhammed	Salman-ı Farisi

threat. While tev'il prevails within the sect, takiyye, the act of disguise, governs relations with others.

Sanctity has broad application in the Nusayriye. Because Islam is considered to be the first and the last religion, the prophets of the other Monotheistic traditions are all considered venerable, just like their holy books, and their teachings are to be respected because they are regarded as the words of the same God. In Nusayriye, the divine figures are the Prophet's family, so-called *Ehl-i Beyt,* the twelve Imams, the gates of the Imams, and the five Orphans[1]. Also regarded as being within this sacred range are those who contributed to science, namely Aristotel, Plato, El Magzun, Ibn-i Sine, Ibn-i Arabi and so on.

The Nusayriye worship differs from that of the Sunnis, not in appearance, but in the bâtin approach. The fasting tradition practised by Sunnis during the month of Ramadan is also a part of the Nusayriye worship. The "Five Commands" of Islam are interpreted and practiced somewhat differently in Nusayriye, and it is compulsory to abstain from eating, drinking and sexual relation on given days. Nusayries have five different religious festivals in the month of Ramadan.

Religious festivals and celebrations have a significant place in the Nusayriye tradition, which includes some 150 festivals and holy days each year (Türk 2001). These festivals and holy days are celebrated in the worshippers' homes and at shrines, particularly the Khezir shrines. The faith in Khezir is widespread and important among the Nusayries. The fact that Hatay has a number of Khezir shrines that are used for the purpose of festivals and celebrations and that stories about Khezir are rather widespread, indicate that belief in Khezir has become something of a cult in this region. In Nusayriye, Khezir is considered equal with Imam Ali and his divine identity. Nusayries have a number of Khezr shrines and visit them quite regularly. Thus the visiting of Khezr shrines is an important aspect of the Nusayriyes' religious beliefs, and they are frequently used as houses of worship. Alms-giving—the most common form of worship within Nusayriye— occurs often during religious festivals and celebrations, as well as at certain times of the year when charity is given to the poor. As for the ritual prayer, *namaz,* it is performed at home in secrecy five times a day, as instructed by the Caferi sect. However, the form, place, or time of the prayer is not important. The namaz

[1]The five Orphans are as follows: Abuzer-ı Gıfari, Abdullah b.Revaha, Miktat b.Amr, Osman b. Maz'un, and Kamber el-Devsi.

can be fulfilled while working, walking or sitting, and at any time or place. What is important is to recite the names of Allah, and pray for him with some degree of intimacy. The number of prostrations and genuflections (rekat) are different from those of Sunni Islam (Türk 2002: 63—65).

Secret Worship

Due to their bâtin approach, Alawis believe that the Koran and Islamic practices have secret meanings, differing from the apparent ones, so they do not attach importance to the five main duties in Islam. Because of this belief and the subsequent lifestyle, Alawis have been accused of heterodoxy, confronted with pressure and aggression, and have suffered from affronts. Hence, Alawism survived as a faith by forming a closed community with marginal attributes. The Alawis were quite distanced from the central government and the Sunnis. They did not intermarry with Sunnis, and avoided any co-operation with them in business. In addition, they did not appear in any courts unless it was compulsory. This, in turn, caused a specific identity and lifestyle to emerge among the Alawis (Bozkurt 2000: 133, 163). Thus, excluded from the centre of society and suppressed by the political power, Alawis established a closed community, and formed a political body opposed to the central authority.

In their historical past, the Alawies established a tradition of radical revolt in Anatolia which, even in the era of the Seljuks, constituted one of the links of the bâtin movement that flourished first in Iran and then journeyed in search of a more democratic order against tyranic authority. Among these riots were those of the Baba Ilyas, Baba Ishak and Sheikh Bedreddin revolts. This tradition of rioting gave Alawism a reputation for being against the goverment and "potentially guilty". Due to this historical image of Alawies, oppressions continued even during the republican era. The events in Malatya (1978), Sivas (1978), Maraş (1978), Çorum (1980), and the Sivas Madımak Fire (1993) provide vivid examples of such oppressions (Bozkurt 2000: 34, 98—129).

As a precaution to persecution and attacks, Alawies worshipped in secrecy, kept their beliefs secret, and were even afraid to reveal their religious preference. Oppressed in the era of the Seljuks and the Ottomans, and objects of genocide during the rule of Yavuz Sultan Selim (as supporters of the Safavies), Alawies had to worship in secrecy. *Ayin-i Cem*, the fundamental

ritual of the Alawies' collective worship, was conducted secretly and until only recently no revelations have been made about the nature of the rite.

Based on secrecy and esoteric belief, the Nusayriye turned out to be a system of beliefs completely closed to the outside, and the Unclehood Tradition forms the foundation of an organisation that is based on secrecy. Thus, it plays a crucial role in the survival of the Nusayriye. This tradition, which ensured the transfer of customs and beliefs, has enabled the Nusayries to furnish their confided male teenagers with their secret teachings on the condition of confidence. Thus the prominent condition for being a distinguished and proficient Nusayri is to be able to keep the secret.

The Collective Worship and its Origin

Cem ceremonies involve not only religious themes such as the recitation of Islamic prayers exclusive to Alawies, but are of a social character as well, bringing solutions to problems within the community, reconciling conflicts, and facilitating the punishment of the guilt. Cem is the fundamental way of worshipping common to all Alawi groups in Turkey, and is regarded by disciples not only as an individual prayer, but also as a type of collective worship. This ritual, which may take various forms according to the intended aim, constitutes the bâtin attribute of the prayer and is performed in secrecy.

Cem is a religious social ritual, performed collectively and conducted by a leader called *Dede*. It is accompanied by music, dance (called *semah*), and sacrifices in Anatolian Alavism. Cem in Anatolian Alavism, as a ceremony, is similar to those performed by Turks before they migrated to Anatolia. It has been pointed out in several studies that the Turks performed dance during mixed meetings, accompanied by alcohol and musical instruments, and retained this custom as integrated into Islamic form, which gave the cem its initial essence (see Eröz 1999: 56). Whereas the cem ritual (known also as "collective worship" in Nusayriye) has Islamic characteristics, in Nusayriye it is a completely religious ritual, conducted by the Sheikh, in which there is neither dance nor music, but only the recitation of prayers from the Koran or the *Kitâbı mecmû* by Teberani.

The Islamic origin of the cem ceremonies can be traced back to the myth of the so called *Forty's Assembly*. The legend has it that the Archangel Gabriel, Cebrail Aleyhüsselam, informs Hz. Muhammet of Allah's invitation

and leads him on his journey. Along the way they are confronted by a lion, and Hz. Muhammet passes it by throwing his sacred ring of prophecy into its mouth. He meets God at the end of the journey and talks to him behind a curtain. When he opens the curtain, he comes across Hz. Ali. Hz. Muhammed joins the *Cem of the Forty* on the way back from the miracle journey. He seats himself beside Hz. Ali, yet fails to recognize him. Hz. Muhammed is told that the number of participants is forty, but Selman Farisi is missing among them. Later, when Selman returns from collecting grapes, Hz. Muhammed is asked to equally divide one grape among all the participants. Hz. Muhammed, making juice from the grape, hands it to the Forty. The Forty, having sipped the juice, begin whirling in trance. When their whirling ends, Hz. Muhammed asks them to reveal the identities of the old man (chief of a convent of dervishes) and the "guide". They answer that the old man is Imam Ali and the guide is Archangel Gabriel. Hz. Muhammet then realizes that Hz. Ali is among them, and by seeing the ring that he threw into the lion's mouth on Hz. Ali's finger, recognizes him (Imam Cafer Buyruğu 1997: 11—16).

The Practice of the Unclehood Tradition: The Collective Worship Ritual

The Unclehood Tradition is particular to the Nusayries. It is maintained with the intention of transferring the secret religious knowledge and the specific Nusayriye social behaviour to the next generations. This practise is restricted to 10-14 year old boys as a compulsory training after primary school. Women are entirely excluded from this tradition, and they are not to come near the location of the rituals. They are only to cook for the feast. Should the women happen to come too near the ritual room, they are required to plug their ears.

This tradition is, in fact, regarded as an introductory ritual to the Nusayriye religion (Olsson 1999: 231). After having been taught the prayers included in *Kitâbı mecmû* by Teberani and the bâtin way of understanding the Koran, the boy has become a Nusayri man. The tradition can also be considered as an example of conscious and planned enculturation. According to Güvenç, enculturation can be defined as the process of acquiring cultural competence, including the youngsters' exposure to conscious and/or unconscious conditioning throughout the training period (Güvenç 1984: 131).

Teachings given to the individual through training at an early age are likely to have deep and indelible effects on the further stages of the youngster's life. These teachings, as well as the practice given during introductory rituals, despite having a determining function in social relations in the community, do not mean much to the children as such. On the other hand, they deeply influence their future lives due to the importance and meaning given by the family and the community (Hökelekli 1998). The teenager will acquire a new position in the community after these rituals. Henceforth he will be considered as an adult Nusayri member who can even take part in other religious rituals. In this sense, the tradition can be compared to rituals of puberty in primitive communities (Kottak 2001: 469—470), defined as "the ceremonies practised for training the adolescent in religious as well as worldly knowledge in order to prepare them for the community" (Örnek 1971: 75—76). During this process, the adolescent is taken somewhere out of sight where he or she is given the necessary knowledge by the instructors or the old men, and undergoes certain painful rituals. Having gone through these procedures, the adolescent is accepted into the community as an adult (see Örnek 1971: 75—76 and Turner 1977).

In the Unclehood Tradition, both the candidate (the boy) and the uncle are supposed to bear certain qualities. The candidate has to be honest and mature enough to keep a secret. It is important that he is born by a Nusayri couple. Any boys who are guilty of serious crimes, slow to learn, or simply indiscreet, are not given this training. The man chosen as the uncle is generally popular in the community, virtuous, a true believer, and proficient at praying. However, he is not to be next of kin to the boy. The uncle—known as "ammessala" in the language of Nusayries—is at least as precious and important as the real father. As for the uncle's children, they are regarded as close as his true siblings, which in turn makes intermarriages unacceptable. Trainees of an uncle are thought to be brothers in religion. Between the boy's family and that of the uncle's, a relationship built on mutual responsibility and duties develops; in this sense the Unclehood Tradition can be seen as a conjectural kinship. The Unclehood can be compared to the tradition of the brotherhood, known as *musahiplik* in Turkish, to be found in Anatolian Alevism. The children of families that have become "musahip" are regarded as siblings, and can not be married to each other. In the tradition of musahiplik, it is customery to hold a cem ritual between the two families that have chosen to be one another's musahip. Such rituals are similiar to the collective worship held within the Unclehood Tradition, yet it is somewhat different in content. In addition to prayers in Turkish and hymns accompanied by the

playing of the *saz*, *semah*, a religious dance, is an essential part of the musahip ritual. As mentioned earlier, the Nusayri version differs in that it does not include the semah and the saz, but concentrates on prayers instead, most of which are read in Arabic from the Koran.

Until recently the collective worship held before the boy left for the uncle's home used to be a three-stage activity held at different times, whereupon the boy was accepted into the uncle's home. Today a one-stage ritual is common alongside the old practice. While this ritual is conducted in a single phase by the Kilazies (one of the two main branches of Nusayriye), it is rendered in three phases by the Haydaries. The reason for the three-staged practice in the Unclehood Tradition is to ensure the confidentiality of the secret knowledge. The candidate is continuously under surveillance between the ritual events, and he is watched by the uncle and other witnesses for his loyalty to his promise to keep the secrets. On the other hand, according to the author's recent findings, it seems that profit-based relations play a major role in the decision to hold the ceremony in three-stages. At each ritual event, the feast is repeated and charity is given to the Sheikh and his assistants (*Necip* and *Nakip*)—and to the uncle as well.

The First Stage of the Ritual

In the first stage of the ritual, an offering is made to the designated uncle and a consultation (*meşvere*) is held. At this stage a decision is made as to whether or not the boy is suitable for unclehood training. Therefore it may be considered the stage at which the boy is tested and given the first training. Following the sacrificial ceremony, the preparations for the feast are completed by the women who are in charge. These women must be married, un-widowed, clean and non-menstruous; if any of them have recently given birth to a child, forty days must have transpired since that time. The gender of the animal selected for sacrifice must be male. Later on, the men gather for the collective worship in the largest room, which is specially arranged for this purpose. During the ritual, some of the sixteen prayers found in *Kitâbı mecmû* are recited. The ritual is attended by the Sheikh, his assistants, the boy's family, the uncle, elderly men and other guests invited. Only Nusayries are allowed into the room. Here, the Sheikh seats himself in the middle with his assistants on both sides.

The ceremony begins after the *Fâtiha* prayer in the Koran and some of the sixteen prayers from *Kitâbı mecmû* are read. Then, incense (*bahur*) is burnt while the incense prayer is read. It is believed that the burning of incense gives the ceremony a mystical atmosphere. After that, the Sheikh takes a sip of grape juice from a glass (*nakfi*) and the glass is passed around among the participants who also drink from it. During the ceremony, *Fâtiha* is the most frequently read prayer. While the *El işâra* prayer from *Kitâbı mecmû* is read, the Sheikh salutes the congregation by putting his hand on the left side of his chest. The congregation also salutes one another and the Sheikh in the same way. While the *Esselêm* prayer, also from *Kitâbı mecum,* is read, the congregation salutes one another again, this time by turning their heads to both sides. Following these rites, the boy is summoned to the room and made to stand beside his uncle. He kisses the hands of the elderly men attending the ceremony. Then the uncle and the candidate kiss the Sheikh's hand in turn. The uncle and the young candidate sit opposite the Sheikh with their legs crossed. When the Sheikh asks the candidate why he has come, he replies that he has come in order to learn the secrets of which he is mature enough to keep. The Sheikh warns the candidate in advance against the possible consequences of revealing the secrets, and wants him to swear not to. Believing that the candidate will be loyal to his promise, the Sheikh gives the boy some advice with reference to being respectful to his uncle, his family and to elderly men, and wants him to swear to follow his advice. After the candidate has swore, the Sheikh offers the candidate a sip of the grape juice. Meanwhile, the Sheikh reads a particular prayer. Then the candidate leaves the room, kissing the hands of the sheikh, the uncle and the elderly men at the ceremony. The ones attending the ritual witness this event as well. In this way the first stage of the ritual is completed. Later on, the congregation leaves the worship room to eat *hurisi*, the special dish of the religious rituals of the Nusayries, and the ritual feast has begun. After the men have left the room, women and children may have their meal.

The Second Stage of the Ritual

Conveyance (*temlik*) or conveyance of the forty (*temlikil erbiğin*), the second stage of the Unclehood Tradition, is performed forty days after the first ritual. At this stage, the congregation gathers and the ritual of the first stage is repeated. Since the first ritual event, the boy has been continuously under the surveillance of the uncle and the witnesses, and his loyalty to his promises has been tested. The fact that the boy has been accepted for the second stage is

Association in Ankara. After 1980, he was elected three times as a MP from HP / SHP / CHP (from 1983 to 1987, and from 1991 to 1999). He was Minister of Justice from November 1991 to July 1994. (Interview with Seyfi Oktay, September 17th 2001).

an indication that he has successfully passed the test. As in the first stage, after the sacrificial ceremony and collective worship of the congregation, the waiting candidate is summoned into the room by the Sheikh. The candidate, kissing the hands of the elderly men and the Sheikh, seats himself beside his uncle opposite the Sheikh, who tells him about his previously successful performance. Then the boy is taught the three concepts *Ayn, Mim*, and *Sin* (AMS), the fundamental principles enabling one to conceive and comprehend the Nusayriye. In this stage the Sheikh instructs the candidate as to why he must not reveal the secrets. The candidate must also swear to learn the prayers properly, be respectful to his parents, family, the old ones and the uncle, and to avoid adultery and theft. Finally, he must swear not to reveal what he has been taught in any circumstance, not break any of his promises, nor eat the meat of a female animal. On completion of this oath-ceremony, the Sheikh asks the candidate to drink from a glass of grape juice, and then the candidate, kissing the hands of the Sheikh and the other elders, leaves the room. Having been accepted to the second stage and entrusted with the secrets revealed so far, the candidate is acknowledged to have joined the Nusairies. At the end of the ritual, the congregation leaves the room to eat the dishes cooked with meat from the sacrificed animals.

The Ultimate Stage of the Ritual

The third and final stage of the ritual, namely the "occuring" (*tulug̃*), is held nine months after the first stage. Meanwhile the uncle and the witnesses have observed the boy to see whether or not he is capable of receiving further training. The boy is made aware that his behaviour is being observed. During the ritual the boy is asked several questions about the knowledge given to him in the first two stages. Thus, this stage is more like an exam which is usually passed. Following the ritual, the Sheikh tells the candidate to leave for the uncle's home to acquire the whole knowledge of the Nusayriye religion. In this stage, a reserve uncle, called "ammedehêl", is also assigned in addition to the first uncle, called the "ammeseyyid". Thus the training process is guaranteed even if the first uncle becomes unavailable. Both uncles and the boy stand in front of the Sheikh, who assigns twelve men to witness that the candidate learns the secrets and keeps them confidential. The twelve witnesses encircle the boy together with the two uncles placing their hands on the Koran, which is situated on top of the boy's head, and they loudly recite a selection of prayers from *Kitâbı mecum*. Meanwhile a glass of grape juice is passed around, from which each takes a sip. Then they kiss one another's

hands, which are held in a crossed position. Afterwards, putting his hand on the Koran, the candidate swears forty times on the confidentiality of the secrets he has been given so far. Then, he and the uncle take a sip from the glass of grape juice together. In the end, the candidate, having kissed the hands of the Sheikh, the uncle, and the elderly men, leaves the ceremony.

At the end of the ritual, the candidate is seen off to the uncle's home, where he will stay until the completion of his training. Meanwhile, he is not permitted to see his family. However, in certain cases of boredom or longing, his family is allowed to call at him. On such occasions the uncle is presented with various gifts. But for as long as the boy stays in his uncle's home, he must remain studying in his room. During this period, the boy is expected to learn how to perform the prayers and the related ablutions. Furthermore, he is taught the identity of the five Orphans, and is made to memorise sixteen prayers from *Kitâbı mecmû*. In addition, he is instructed on moral codes and social behaviour within Nusayriye. The boy is expected to behave like an adult Nusayri. This period of training generally lasts for no more than forty days; however, the length of time ultimately depends upon the learning capacity of the boy, to whom prayers can be taught accordingly in different lengths. The boy is not allowed to play outside or to meet visitors throughout his training period. On completion of the training, the boy's family presents various gifts, such as food and sweets, to the uncle. The boy then returns to his home as a competent Nusayri.

The uncle remains an important figure throughout the boy's life—just like his father—and on religious holidays the boy will present him with gifts (*aydiy*). At the same time, the uncle is to be helpful and to support the boy on particular occasions and in times of hardship. Furthermore, there is an affinity and solidarity between the two families.

Changes in the Unclehood Tradition

Throughout history, the Alawis had to worship in secrecy in order to protect themselves against oppression and threats, keeping their beliefs to themselves. Some did not even dare to reveal that they were Alawis at all. Thus, they have had to carry on a closed communal life. However, along with the relief and lessening of the oppression brought about by the establishment of the Republic, the structure of the rigid and closed community disintegrated as a result of factors such as urbanisation and the deterioration of economic

conditions and social relations. Hence Nusayriye and the Unclehood Tradition have undergone certain changes.

Within the Unclehood Tradition, the boy must still be honest, mature enough to keep secrets, and descending from a Nusayri family. The position of the "uncle", however, which was formerly occupied only by Sheikhs respected in the community, is today open to any respected man with adequate religious wisdom. While the nomination of the uncle was previously made by the father of the boy, today the boy himself may select the one whose home he prefers for convenience. It has recently been observed that some youngsters are reluctant to undergo this training, and that some families do not require it of their children at all, considering it to be unnecessary.

As already mentioned, until recently the collective worship held before the boy left for the uncle's home used to be a three-stage ceremony conducted at different times whereupon the boy was accepted to the uncle's home. Today a one-stage ritual is common alongside the old practice. However, it seems that profit-based relations play a major role in conducting the ceremony in three-stages because the feasts are repeated in each stage, along with the charity given to the Sheikh, his assistants and the uncle. In addition to sacrificing a sheep for the feast, the Sheikh conducting the ritual, and his assistants, are awarded a certain amount of money, and the uncle receives presents. Furthermore, poor families chosen by the Sheikh are given financial support. Meanwhile, the boy's neighbours reward his family with presents. On the boy's return to his home, his family also invites the uncle for dinner. In addition, the fact that certain individuals have been known to act as uncles for a number of different boys, suggests that the Unclehood institution is economically profitable.

With time, alterations have occurred in the tradition as far as the form and the content of the ritual teaching is concerned. Originally, prayers used to be taught by heart, whereas they are now taught in writing. In the course of transfering religious knowledge between generations, certain differences and variations in the size and content of the prayers (between the original text and what is today taught to the boys) have occurred (Keser 2002: 62). When some of the boys' notebooks were examined, it was observed that most of the Arabic words were spelled in Latin letters. The reason for this discrepancy lies both in the fact that the majority of Nusayries, though speaking Arabic, are not literate in this language, and that the original prayers have been orally transferred for such a long time that mis-translations, additions and annulments have occurred in the teaching process.

The duration of the training has also been shortened to accommodate the learning capacity of the boys. While the boy used to stay in the uncle' home for six months, today the stay last no longer than 40 days. The duration is sometimes deliberately shortened by simplifying prayers if the learning capacity of the boy is poor. The requirements that the uncle follow-up on the boy's progress for one and a half year, and that he takes responsibility for helping the boy throughout his life seem also to have loosened due to the fact that, today, the same person may render unclehood to a number of different boys at the same time.

Conclusion

Because it is a form of conjectural relationship, and also a process of planned enculturation in which the boy acquires the cultural identity of the Nusayries, the Unclehood Tradition remains one of the fundamentals of Nusayriye.

The fact that the Nusayries have been oppressed throughout history has led them to perform their worship in secrecy, the result being a closed community. Moreover, their belief that the Koran has a bâtin way of interpretation and that certain knowledge should be kept secret is reflected in the two principal characteristics of the Nusayriye: the concepts of *tev'il*, the secret knowledge itself, and *takiyye*, the confidentiality of the secret knowledge. The Unclehood Tradition is the procedure for transferring this knowledge to the young Nusayri generations while keeping it secret from outsiders. Thus, the Unclehood Tradition has a determining function in the survival of the closed community.

However, after the establishment of the Republic, changes and alterations in this tradition have also affected the closed, secret nature of the community. Today, the rigid structure of the closed community of the Nusayries has undergone profound changes.

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ALEVI THEOLOGY
FROM SHAMANISM TO HUMANISM

Hege Irene Markussen

Having participated for a period in the weekly *semah* course in an Alevi association in Turkey, I asked one of the teachers for an interview. I was studying the transmission of traditions and beliefs within the community, and was puzzled by the manner in which the origins and meanings of the religious dance movements were passed on to the younger generation. The participants learned to perform semah foremost as dances with regular movements and choreographies, all associated with central concepts within *Alevilik*. It seemed to me that the movements had several layers of meaning because they could be variously interpreted as remnants from Central Asian Shamanism, as symbols of contemporary Alevi Humanism, and within the context of traditional Sufi Mysticism. While chatting about the origins of semah, the teacher explained:

> —In this semah, for example, the movement of the arms resembles the wings of the crane. This bird has had a special meaning in Central Asia throughout history. It has always been a symbol of God. Well, earlier it was a symbol of the gods, but that is merely a question of evolutionary development. The movement symbolises birds flying up in the air and, in fact, the whole circle of semah dancers symbolizes this take-off, which is an important symbol of Alevi community and togetherness. You know; social unity.
> —But I thought the circle of semah dancers symbolized the aim of reaching unity with God?
> —Yes, of course it does, that's the aim. And you know, it was first initiated by Muhammed on his ascension to God. (Interview January 2004).

The manner in which he chose to elaborate is interesting for several reasons. First of all, it is a comprehensive interpretation that includes references both to Central Asian Shamanistic symbols as understood within the community, and to Humanistic representations like togetherness and social unity. Secondly, and of particular interest here, is the fact that it is only after receiving an explicit inquiry from me that the teacher makes mention of semah's connection to the Sufi ritual of ecstatic union with God, *zikir*, as well as its legendary start which is said to have originated with Muhammed himself. As the Islamic heritage of semah is generally considered no less

important than its supposed Shamanistic origin, or Humanistic essence, the under-communication of Islam has to be understood within the context of the transmission of religious knowledge in the urban, Alevi associational communities. Furthermore, by characterizing the difference between poly- and monotheistic modes of worship as an evolutionary development, the teacher sets the stage for an apparent development of Alevi traditions from ancient times until today. In the association in which I have done my research, it is taught that while Alevilik has developed and changed over time, it has simultaneously persisted as well. Just as the symbol of the crane is conceived as having an a-historical essence, so Alevilik is presented as having an essence that is not specifically connected to Islam. This article will elaborate and discuss how Alevilik, through the transmission of religious knowledge within the association, becomes a holistic religious system based upon the assumption that it has an essence which dates back to the beginning of time, and that this essence has survived through the subsequent evolutionary phases of Shamanism, Islam, Urbanisation, and Humanism.

The Alevi Association as a "Historical Apparatus"

Most of the participants in the semah course come from families that have migrated from the eastern part of Turkey. Some of them have experienced the migration themselves, coming to Istanbul either with their families or alone. Others were born in the city, their parents or grandparents being the ones who migrated in search of economic opportunities. While some of their families, especially fathers or grandfathers, keep close contact with the place of origin, most of the youngsters are left with a vague remembrance of visiting their village during childhood summers. Among the youngsters in the association, the degree of contact with the village varies according to the opportunities to travel, the continued presence of relatives in the village, and the safety of the journey. This situation seems to be illustrative of the country's general migration patterns, and not just those involving the Alevis per se.[1] For young people without practical ties to their place of origin, the community within the association provides a collective remembrance of how Alevilik was practiced in the villages. Because the association is an urban institution housing activities remembered as constitutional parts of the villagers' religious, cultural, and social lives, there is a strong emphasis on

[1] Migration to the big cities has been characterized by chain migration, which, according to Erder, "increases the level of interaction and interdependence between the city and the country, [and] usually constitutes an environment where localism (sharing a place of origin) becomes an accessible and useful relation". (Erder 1999: 165-166).

teaching the essential nature of Alevilik. In the process of transmitting traditional practices to an urban public, the association contributes to a kind of revivification of memory by providing information about both the recent and the distant past. This information is presented by teachers employing published material through lectures, seminars and courses, and is therefore considered official. With the aim of presenting Alevilik as an a-historical essence transmitted in various forms from generation to generation, these teachers re-construct history and create a social memory of the past. This memory is de-contextualised as collective interpretations of the vanished past, but developed contemporarily in the specific context of the urban Alevi associations. It is not equivalent to remembered sequences of the past because it has its own structure and creates meaning rather than imparting knowledge (Eriksen 1996: 36). Village traditions are, in general, remembered as better, purer and more authentic than their urban counterparts, and nostalgic feelings for the authentic Anatolian Alevi past are experienced by the individuals, regardless of their personal experience of village life. With this understanding in mind, we may refer to the association—with its teachers of various courses, traditional religious specialists, *dedes*, and intellectuals like writers and speakers—as an "historical apparatus" (Eriksen 1996: 38).

Within this environment, the semah teacher passes on his knowledge and understanding of semah. During my participation in the semah course, the main teacher left and his assistant assumed responsibility for the weekly semah lessons. And since I was unable to detect a significant difference between the two in teaching strategies and ideology, I became curious to know where and how Alevilik teachers receive their education. From the assistant teacher I learned that before he joined this association, he had participated in another, as both a student in the Alevilik courses and a teacher of semah. However, as a result of disagreements with the management, he quit and began attending the association in which I did my research. There he became the assistant teacher of the semah courses, and rediscovered his old Alevilik teacher who, it seems, had affiliated himself with the same association. Hence, although teachers, *dedes*, and intellectuals are called upon from various places in order to teach semah, saz, theater or Alevilik, they are all selectively chosen and operating within the same framework.

The a-historical essence of Alevilik

Evolution from the Beginning of Times

Vitebsky, studying the Sakha people in Siberia, informs us that

> [...] the Sakha, who have their own republic in North-Eastern Siberia, have almost no shamans but a rapidly growing ideology called shamanism. [...]The city of Yakutsk contains flourishing societies for the revival of shamanism, and their members are largely doctors, teachers, anthropologists, historians, vets, physicists, biologists, writers and film directors. [...] These people explore shamanism as the ancient wisdom of their own people. The young intellectuals of the city can turn to their own rural grandparents for authentic "ethnic wisdom" as well as to books on anthropology and folklore, which are very popular reading matter. [...] They know their knowledge about shamanic ideas, not as habitus but as facts. (Vitebsky 2003: 282-286).

Even though most of the people frequenting the Alevi association are not urban intellectuals but migrants without higher education, the process which Vitebsky describes is strikingly similar to what I have labeled as re-construction of history and creation of social memory. In Siberia, the boosting of shamanic ideas into iconic status goes hand in hand with the creation of a more abstract sense of ethnicity, and what is there considered as shamanism has become "a future-oriented claim-staker in terms of ethnic politics, dressed up in its older rhetoric as a rationale" (Vitebsky 2003: 286). In the Alevi community in Istanbul, an Anatolian authentic heritage offers a revitalized narrative link with the past, a sense that the conditions of Alevis today can be seen as the developmental outcome of this past, a revivification of memory. The youngsters can turn to their rural grandparents to learn about Alevi traditional practices, but it is within the educational programs of the association that they can explore the essential nature of Alevilik and its rural authenticity. The transmission of beliefs and traditions, whether it is performance of bodily movements like semah, or more abstract theological knowledge taught in the Alevilik courses, reflects the same attempt of teaching Alevilik as a coherent system of belief. This is a result of what Vitebsky has called a "crisis of literal belief" (Vitebsky 2003: 286). Alevilik is not taught as habitus, but as facts, and the transmission relies on the students' rationality and logical sense. Alevi traditional practices are regarded, in the associations, as a part of an evolutionary development from the beginning of time to the present. Through this concept of evolutionism, the past is proffered with a high degree of truth value, because disagreements and different or opposing traditions can be interpreted as remnants from religions

and cults that have passed through Anatolia throughout history. Thus, learning Alevilik becomes an intellectual journey through eras of Shamanism, Islam, urbanization and Humanism.

However, while Alevi traditional practices may be addressed and discussed in courses and seminars, what is considered to be the essential nature of Alevilik remains common sense within the community. This is well illustrated by the short conversation I had with a participant of the Alevilik course during the tea break between lectures. Having spent one lecture discussing different criteria for becoming a *Dede*, the debate continued outside the classroom until one of the participants said: "What is essential in Alevilik, is that everything can be discussed!" When I asked him: "Is that open for discussion?", he smiled and answered: "Well, some things are reality". If we can say that the Alevis in the associations learn Alevilik as facts, and not as habitus, we should be aware of these "realities". In Bourdieu's terms, the mental structures through which members of a group interpret the social world constitute the doxa sphere (Bourdieu 1997: 158-160). The Alevi realities, being parts of doxa are neither verbalized nor subjected to reflection. In other words, when some aspects of an individual or collective world are transformed from habitus to facts, other aspects continue to exist within the doxa sphere. Some of these realities, or "doxic truths", function as the basis of the evolutionary scheme within Alevilik. The notion that Alevis are, and have since the break of dawn, been more humanistic than other Muslims, and the assumption that Alevilik has always existed, seems logical to the students—a rationality in which the knowledge acquires a formal status, and is thus considered to represent "truths".

According to Vitebsky, "when habitus becomes packaged into facts, it comes with a trademark and a copyright" (Vitebsky 2003: 286). The knowledge not only changes, but comes with the claim of exclusivity. In the environment of the associations, the traditional practices of Anatolia have received a meaning which is primarily "ours", as opposed to anyone else's. In his critique of the historiography of the Turkish Alevis, Livni notices the same phenomenon:

> Studies on this topic [syncretism in Anatolia] showed very well that in Anatolia, rural communities developed local rituals and beliefs by mixing elements taken from many religions. This phenomenon can be understood easily, since Anatolia has always been a crossroad of many religions and cultures. Moreover, throughout the Seljuk and Ottoman eras, alongside the official Islam, worship of saints, pilgrimage to holy places, and secret

> rituals crossed religious and ethnic boundaries. *However, no one could demonstrate in what ways Alevilik is different from other folk traditions in the area* [my italicization] (Livni 2002: 5).

This copyright on rural Anatolia defines the borders between Alevi and Sunni, not only in the urban setting, but also in the villages. Shankland found, in his comparative research on Alevi and Sunni villages in Anatolia at the end of the 1980s, that

> All over the sub-province, the ability to play an instrument is identified as being characteristic of the Alevis and a further element marking the differences between the two sides [Alevi and Sunni]. The instruments they play are usually the saz, an eight-stringed instrument similar to a mandolin, the zurna, a pipe with a double reed, and davul, drum (Shankland 2003: 36-37).

The *saz*, which accompanies the semah dancers in their performance, is a central element in Alevi worship, and one example of traditional practices understood as parts of the a-historical essence of Alevilik that supposedly has been sustained from the beginning of time. As such, these practices have passed through phases of the worship of natural phenomena, Shamanism, Islam, and urbanization, and find themselves in contemporary Istanbul in forms that differ from the original. The responsibility for uncovering the nature of Alevilik rests with the specialists: *dedes* and intellectuals. As the teacher of the Alevilik courses puts it:

> My intellectual aim as a researcher is to find the original source of religion. Alevilik comes from Shamanism which again comes from the worship of natural phenomena like blood, trees, fire, caves. I believe that the worship of caves must be the oldest, and that is the oldest form of Alevilik (Conversation May 2004).

The quest for the evolutionary development of Alevilik is a selective search highlighting some epochs while excluding others. These periods become histories of the Anatolian past, even though they are not always limited in time and space. It is to these histories, which I have labeled Shamanism, Islam, Urbanization, and Humanism, that we now turn.

Shamanism

According to Metin And, "It is an established fact that the Central Asian Shamanistic influence is felt on the dancing of the religious orders and

the quasi-religious dancing of the village Alevis" (And 1987: 21). The connection between Alevi and Shamanistic practices was established as early as the 1920s and 1930s by Mehmed Fuat Köprülüzade and various other authors whose articles appeared in the journal *Türk Yurdu*. These studies have been criticized for relying on the nineteenth-century theories of Christian missionaries, who "attempted to "disclose" the Shaman origins of the Turks" (Livni 2002: 4). Whether the linking of Alevilik with Shamanism began as a Christian attempt to define Alevis as non-Muslims, as support for the authentic Turkishness of the nationalist struggle to establish the Republic, or as the logical outcome of the study of Mogul migration to Anatolia, the premiss that Alevi practices display Shamanistic remnants is today so well established that neither the intellectuals connected to the associations, nor academic researchers, have given the matter the critical attention it deserves. Assumptions based on parallels and logical thought, rather than critical investigation, have substituted for tangible evidence of the historical connection between Alevi traditions and the beliefs and practices of Central Asian Shamans. In the Alevi historiography, postulations that overlook hundreds of years in time in order to link the newly constructed system of Alevilik with a coherent worldview known as Shamanism, have been the rule rather than the exception (Şener 2003, Korkmaz 2004). In the case of semah, this rationale provides a link between the circled, ecstatic performance of semah and the shamans' journeys to other worlds[1]. In the association, these assumptions are "doxic truths" linking contemporary Alevilik with the beginning of times. In other words, the history of Shamanism serves as evidence of the a-historical nature of Alevilik, and when knowledge of Shamanism is transmitted in the Alevilik courses, it is taught with the understanding that such practices are indicative of the social and religious organization in general. The fact that shamans can be female as well as male is viewed as evidence of equality between men and women within these communities. Moreover, this equality is believed to be the result of the matriarchal nature of shamanistic societies, a matriarchy whose remnants are to be seen in the Alevi Cem rituals where men and women worship together (Korkmaz 2004: 49-50, Şener 2003: 10, 17, 104-110). This continuation of equality between the sexes is considered an important differentiating element between Alevis and Sunnis, and its shamanistic roots are located in Central Anatolia before civilization, and more importantly, before the coming of Islam (Korkmaz 2004: 48).

[1] "The semah resembles the ecstatic dance of the shaman" (And 1987: 23).

The literature used in the transmission of religious knowledge within the association, though considered formal, and published in the format of research publications, should not be read as academic research reports, but rather as theological exegesis. Consequently, the literature should be understood as a primary source in itself; religious documents of normative character. It is not representative of the actual ritual life in the associations, but the creation of a religious historiography of contemporary Alevilik.[1] This body of literature does not refer to empirical studies for legitimacy, but to other writers honored for their religious ranks or university degrees. For example, in defense of his claim that the Alevi-Bektaşi culture is the authentic Turkish culture and religion, derived from Shamanism, Şener writes:

> Dr. Mehmet Eröz expresses: "The main source of Alevilik and Bektaşilik is the Turkish culture and the ancient Turkish religion". In other words, Mehmet Eröz says that the source of the formation of Alevilik and Bektaşilik we see in Anatolia today is Shamanism, the ancient Turkish religion. (Şener 2003: 91-92).

Because the taking of shortcuts between ancient Turkish culture and Alevilik is a common way of bypassing hundreds of years in history, both in teachings and publications, being Alevi has become synonymous with Turkish and Anatolian.

Both research literature and Alevi dogma display a static understanding of Shaman societies as exhibiting coherent systems of belief, practice and social organization. The claims that ancient Central Asian Shamanistic societies were matriarchal and liberal towards alcohol demonstrate both the selective use of shamanistic features in the polemic against Sunnis, and the shallow knowledge of how these societies actually were organized. One reason for this is well illustrated by the comment of one of the intellectuals in the association:

> We have valuable Turkish sources on Shamanism, like for example Abdülkadir Inan's book from 1954, and now we have newly acquired access to interesting research on Shamanism from Russia, published in the 1920s and 1930s (Conversation, May 2004).

When it comes to valuation of sources, the logic of Alevi exegesis is quite the opposite of the general understanding of research as an accumulative

[1] Olsson labels this literature "emic historiography of religion" and considers it to be an essential part of "the scriptualization" of Alevilik; the same process taking place among other Ali-oriented religions as well (Olsson 1998: 204-205).

process. Old publications are considered more valuable than newer ones. They are closer to the original knowledge and therefore more authentic.

For those who are acquainted with contemporary studies of shamans, shamanists and shamanism, it is quite clear that "almost every assertion is contestable, arguable, controversial, and certainly in need of explanation, expansion, and some equivocation" (Harvey 2003: 1). Within the research history of Shamanism, the practices of Shamans have been described by initiation processes, control or possession of spirits, healing practices, and journeys to other worlds (Hamayon 1996, Campbell 1995, Turner 1992, Lewis 1989, Grim 1983, Harner 1980, and Popov 1968), transmuted into universal symbolic systems of "pure" and "degenerated" shamans (Eliade 1964), and deconstructed as dispersed socio-religious practices (Humphrey 1996). In the process, Shamanism has been created as a coherent system of beliefs and practices, based on the Shaman and applied to the community in which she/he is operating. Implications of such a holistic view on shamans and their communities, are emphasized by Humphrey, studying Shamans in Mongolia: "Among the practitioners there was no name for the various activities that outsiders have called 'shamanism' and these practices were not thought of as all one thing" (Humphrey 1996: 4). In addition, importance has been given to the fact that shaman practices are not static entities immune to outside influences. As Harvey neatly puts it:

> Because shamans are not the only leaders, and "shamanists" are not the only religionists, in their communities – and since shamans and shamanists might also be Buddhists or Catholics – it must be clear that diversity is of the essence (Harvey 2003: 7).

From Rural to Urban

Despite the fact that there is a serious lack of research concerning Alevi villages, both past and present, it is generally agreed that the beliefs and practices currently taught to Alevi youths are urban adjustments of what were once aspects of traditional Alevi village life. In keeping with this perspective, it can be seen that those institutions considered fundamental to Alevilik have undergone transformation within the environment of the urban associations; some of them are said to be fading away, while others face changes in structure and outlook.

The practice of spiritual brotherhood, *musahiplik*—modeled after Muhammed and Ali's legendary induction of brotherhood during the ascension, *mirac*—is no longer prevalent as it is considered practically impossible for individuals to become "spiritual relatives" who share all aspects of life, or completely submit themselves to the path of the *tarikat* in the urban environment. It is remembered as a practical arrangement that brought families together in the villages, authorised by a *cem* ritual in which the spiritual brothers to be bowed before the *dede* and promised to follow the path of the tarikat. As a continuation of blood-related social organization before Shamanism, *musahiplik* is considered one of the practices linking Alevilik to the beginning of times. Now that it is fading away as a practical arrangement in the urban environment, *musahiplik* is revered instead as a symbol of the perfect human being, *insan-ı kâmil*, who submits to the path of God in a social setting—a symbol of the moral standards, purity and authenticity of Alevi village people.

The *Cem* has lost its significance as an annual ritual of social renewal with moral and spiritual accounting of the villagers' actions, peacemaking between persons in conflict, and vows for the year to come. In the association, cem is performed on a weekly basis for approximately one or two hours. It has its regular prayers, hymns and rites, and the only segment that is open to adjustment is the dede's speech. Traditional elements that might produce unplanned events, like peacemaking or zikir, are generally left out.[1] Indeed, the weekly cem has, in many respects, adopted a symbolic character; both the traditional annual accounting for the year that passed and the practice of peacemaking before worship, remembered as principal components of the annual cem, are today revered as special authentic traits of Anatolian Alevilik. These traits are understood as evidence of the emphasis on social harmony and inter-human relationships; that is, on the humanistic focus that has allegedly been sustained within traditional Alevilik ever since the first social organization of humankind.

Among the dedes, some have become mere ritual specialists, while others have adapted to the organizational character of the associations, and joined the ranks of the intellectuals, giving lessons and publishing books on Alevilik and *Dedelik*. As the intellectuals are now in charge of teaching

[1]The *cem* ceremonies conducted in the associations are standardised to the extent that the few times I have experienced peacemaking between people in conflict, the rest of the congregation has become surprised, some of them even embarrassed, whispering among themselves. Further, the closest I have seen to an ecstatic experience are people shedding tears in remembrance of Imam Hüseyin's martyrdom.

Alevilik, it is done through courses, lectures, and seminars. This approach to the transmission of knowledge requires a certain degree of rationality and consistency, and thus the varieties of Alevi beliefs and practices, which spring from diverse village traditions that span across a wide range of geography, are melded into one coherent system and presented as *the* fundamental Alevi religion or philosophy.

Since the dedes are considered to possess firsthand knowledge of traditional village practices, they have become symbolic links between the rural and the urban setting. Some of them, especially the older ones, are often seen as living embodiments of these practices within the urban Alevi religion.

In other words, the institutions of *Musahiplik*, *Dedelik* and *Cem* live on as symbols of what is interpreted and communicated to be the basic features of Alevilik: the moral perfection of the human being and an essential, natural concern with human relationships. They have become moral abstractions in the urban setting, highlighting the continuation of practices from the beginning of times and, hence, the authenticity of the Anatolian villages.

Urban and Rural Semah

Semah dances from various regions of Turkey have gone through the same process. In the association, semah, which is remembered as one of the essential components of the traditional cem ritual, is a part of the weekly cem. Every Sunday, four of the dancers from the semah course are expected to attend in order to perform a highly standardised semah, which, as measured by time, is a rather small part of the ritual. The cem is not frequently attended by the youngsters. They generally participate when it is their time to perform semah. Together with saz courses, the semah courses are of special interest to the young. Some participate with the aim of becoming a good dancer and performing in folklore shows. For others, however, learning semah is a part of the more extensive project of understanding the essential nature of Alevi beliefs and practices. For many, attending a performance of semah had been the first attraction that gave rise to a genuine interest in Alevilik:

> I went [to the association] with a friend from work. He is also an Alevi and he wanted me to watch him perform semah. I thought "why not? I can have a look". And the moment I saw the dancers performing —whirling— I got this overwhelming feeling inside. Like "Yes, this is it!" I joined the course

> the week after. I was thrilled. While performing semah I felt like [I was] going back to the real and pure times. Then I slowly began to understand what it means to be an Alevi (Interview May 2004).

This kind of experience seems to be quite common among the semah dancers in the community. The overwhelming sensation felt while observing a performance of semah for the first time, has often been described as a combination of being drunk, *sarhoş*, and in harmony, *huzur*. These concepts can easily be related to the performance of semah as zikir, the repetition of either words or bodily movements in remembrance of God. Here the dancers reach an ecstatic state of drunkenness through concentration and the repetition of movements. In this state of mind, they travel to "the real and pure", that is, to unity with God. The interesting aspect in the performance of semah as taught in the association is that no one appears to be encouraged to reach this state of mind. The dancers are expected to execute their performance without error, and with respect and seriousness. The focus, in both the courses and the cem ritual itself, is on performing the dance in the right manner at the right time, and thus there is absolutely no scope for "losing oneself" in the worship of God. At the same time, the teachers are known to make frequent reference to the fact that although semah is performed as folkloric dance, the performance is, in the end, a mode of worship. Thus, during the courses, as we were bringing our movements to perfection, we all experienced a sense of ambivalence respecting the necessity for precise execution on the one hand, and the holiness of worship on the other.

Complaints about the standardization of semah movements are common among the youngsters. I have been told many times that earlier, in the villages, semah was a kind of zikir, a real ecstatic experience. But now, in the urban environment, performances with regular movements and choreographies have taken the place of worship. Most of those who complained, however, had never directly experienced a traditional semah. The idea of such a semah can therefore be understood as a part of their collective, social memory of Alevi village life. The feeling of "going back to the real and pure times", expressed by the young dancer watching his first semah performance, illustrates another aspect of this social memory. The journey goes back in time, not only to traditional village life, but further back to the beginning of times. By performing semah, the dancers consider themselves to be continuing a heritage of ecstatic experiences that has evolved from the shaman's spiritual journey to Sufi zikir. This elevation of earlier, purer and more authentic times to iconic status creates a sense that the present form of

Alevilik is a developmental outcome of past experiences, but that the essential nature of Alevilik has nonetheless survived the ravages of time.

As a result of the paucity of documented accounts, the manner in which semah was, or is, performed in Alevi villages is difficult to ascertain. The few available descriptions focus on how the choreography and movements of the different semah dances are to be carried out, and mention nothing about the kind of ecstatic experiences that are remembered as the authentic form of semah worship.[1]

Shankland, in his empirical study of an Alevi village at the end of the 1980s, makes the following observation:

> All I spoke with or witnessed remain attached to their song and dance, but practiced them mainly in a secular setting. Here, the dance and song were seen not as religion but as part of 'Aleviness', even though the sentiments expressed, and the structure of the gatherings, may be very similar to those in the religious rituals, particularly in their emphasis on mutual peace and goodwill. I witnessed, therefore, a community in which for many individuals the symbols and ideas of religion are coming to be seen as culture, a culture that can be celebrated in its own right rather than being linked to a distinct body of theological exegesis (Shankland 2003: 143-144).

Shankland does not explain precisely how the villagers were practicing their song and dance in a secular setting, nor does he address the question of why their gatherings, with sentiments and structures similar to those found in the religious rituals, were not, in fact, religious rituals. We can detect in Shankland's statement the observation that the practices of the villagers have changed over time. But even more significantly, we can detect an understanding of traditional practices as being somehow more religious than their currently altered counterparts. As they change away from what is thought to be their authentic forms, the practices are conceived as being cultural, as opposed to religious, presentations. The logic behind this rationale is the concept of an evolutionary development in which the villages represent authenticity in terms of both time and space.

[1] See for example the description of semah in a Tahtaci village in Izmir (Yilmaz 1948: 71-73, also cited in And 2003:181-182), and And's descriptions of semah in Eskişehir, Tokat and Antalya (And 2003:182-186).

Islam

...as an abruption of the evolutionary development

Thus far we have focused on the alleged evolutionary development of Alevilik from the beginning of times through the phases of Shamanism and traditional village life. We have also concentrated on the weekly semah and Alevilik courses as examples of how Alevilik is represented as an a-historical entity still alive in present day Istanbul. Now we take a closer look at how Islam fits into this picture.

In his study, Shankland sums up the villager's adherence to Islam in this manner:

> Most men are clear that they are Muslim. However, others may themselves maintain that they are hardly, conventionally speaking, Islamic at all. They may, in this case, refer to a shamanistic past, and say that they were only converted to Islam after the Arab invasion of Anatolia. Others may suggest that they are half-Muslim, half-Christian: yarı Hıristiyan, yarı Müslüman (Shankland 2003: 88)

In comparison, the youngsters in the association, when asked, all considered themselves Muslims. Their identification with Islam has, however, some of the same implications that Shankland is mentioning. As we can recall from the quotation in the introduction, it was only *after* I had made an inquiry that the semah teacher mentioned semah's relation to Muhammed's ascension as well as the zikir ritual, performed in Islamic mysticism for the attainment of unity with God. My argument is that the choice of not communicating semah's Islamic heritage is a natural outcome of a profoundly ambivalent attitude towards Islam. The fact that the youngsters basically identify themselves as Muslims creates a dilemma, because the values which they cherish as the essence of Alevilik are not directly connected to Islam. They are taught that these values—equality between men and women, humanism, liberalism, democracy and so on—are characteristics of societies that pre-date the coming of Islam. Further, the historical invasion of Arab Muslims in Anatolia is considered to have been an interruption in the natural development of the essential values of Alevilik. Hence, historically, without questioning the "Muslim-ness" of Anatolian Alevis, the invading "Arab Islam" has been viewed in opposition to the authentic Turkish version:

> [...] The Islam that formed in the homeland [Anatolia] created a new formation by accepting along with its own values the values in Islam that were in accord with it. Maybe this difference is the basis of the Alevi-Sunni

> separation in Anatolia today. In other words, most probably, the distinction between Alevi and Sunni is ultimately the clash between Turkish and Arabic culture. It is the resistance of Turkish culture against a culture alien to it – Arab culture. (Şener 2003: 90-91).

The author's basic point here is that the Arab invasion gave rise to the distinction between Alevi and Sunni, not because the Anatolian population resisted *Islamification*, but because they protected their own Islamic faith by opposing *Sunnification*. As Sunni Islam is considered equal to Arabic Islam, Sunnification is perceived as something that has been a threat ever since the Arab invasion. Hence, the Alevi antagonism towards Sunni Muslims is not only legitimized by historical and legendary massacres and incidents of oppression, but also, theologically, as the rivalry between two versions of Islam.

During the Alevilik course, the youngsters learn that the unpolluted Alevilik is profoundly rural and that the Sunnification of our time is historically connected to urban conditions. Still, Alevilik is under the influence of Sunni Islam both in the villages and in urban environments—a fact that validates the need to teach the younger generation the authentic Alevi village practices (Korkmaz 2004: 56, 65). Some of the youngsters were very concerned with the supposed Sunnification of Alevis, and they were eager to participate in the protection and transmission of Alevilik:

> If I didn't know today either, after coming here, today I know this much, but my knowledge... My mother knows a lot more than me, of course, but [with] my outside knowledge... I can't leave any knowledge to the ones after me and they will become sunnified as they go along. Sunnification is not a bad thing, but the essence of Alevilik will get lost. That's why. I mean, in order for it not to get lost, I mean, I feel responsible. I am thinking that I have to leave something behind in the future. That's why I come here. I join the courses in order not to give wrong information to the ones that come after me (Interview May 2004).

The symptoms of Sunnification that appear to trigger commitment among the young are related to basic overt differences in ritual life. For example, the fact that the fast in remembrance of Kerbala during Muharram resembles the Ramazan fast, and that Arabic prayers are used instead of their Turkish equivalents, are topics of criticism both for teachers of Alevilik courses and among participants during tea breaks. Still, the most important sign of Sunnification is the lack of knowledge about Alevilik, especially among those of the younger generation. This explains why they consider the

very act of passing down knowledge "to the ones that come after" a direct challenge to Sunnification. And yet, despite their concern about changes and the loss of knowledge, there remains a sound belief in the survival of the essence of Alevilik:

Arabic, Iran, I mean to learn the Koran... Koran courses, I mean veil... I mean there are people who change when they get married with Sunnis, it changes, of course. But I think that the essence [of Alevilik] is the same. The essence is difficult to change (Interview May 2004).

... as the end of the evolutionary development

According to Alevi historiography, after struggle and opposition, the Anatolian Alevis accepted Islam conditionally through the teachings of the wandering dervishes in the area. Among the most influential dervishes was Hacı Bektaş, who is believed to have brought with him an Imam Ali-oriented version of Islam, fused with the continuation of ancient Central Asiatic shaman practices. With reference to a story in the hagiography of Hacı Bektaş, Melikoff, connecting the semah dances with the ancient shaman practices of Central Asia, asserts that

> Though he [Hacı Bektaş] was a Muslim, he did not give up the ancient practices and customs of Central Asia [...] In ancient days, juniper-trees grew on its [the Hırkadağı mountain close to the present town Hacıbektaş where Hacı Bektaş used to live] summit. The dervishes used to light fires and dance around them, performing the semah, ecstatic dance (Melikoff 1998: 2).

In this legend, Hacı Bektaş and his followers did indeed dance around a fire, but whether or not we understand the story to exemplify the dervishes' habitual shaman practices, depends on what we are looking for. Because it is an interesting example of how our understanding of Alevilik is a matter of chosen perspectives on Alevi historiography, I will quote the end of the legend, which makes specific reference to the semah:

> When he came to the peak of the mountain, he said to the Abdal dervishes "Quickly, come here, light a fire". The dervishes piled up small bits and pieces of wood and set fire to it. When the fire was burning the Monarch [Hacı Bektaş] became exuberant and began to dance semah. The dervishes also joined him and they circled the fire forty times. Then Hacı Bektaş took off his cowl, *hırka*, threw it into the fire, and withdrew. The hırka burned

> completely and turned to ashes. Later the Monarch took those ashes and threw them into the air. He said: "Firewood will grow from the places where the ashes fall". Then he turned and went to his abode. Since that moment the firewood has increased on that mountain from day to day. The Abdal-dervishes would go and cut it, and bring and burn it, and be warmed by it. For this reason, that mountain is called Hırkadağı, the mountain of the cowl, its firewood shall not run out before the Day of Resurrection (Gölpınarlı 1995: 34-35)[1]

Focusing on remnants from ancient Central Asian customs, Melikoff relates the exuberant dance around the fire to the dance of the shaman—a ritual which has become one of the symbols of the Shamanistic societies of ancient Central Asia. Further, she assumes that this happening indicates a habitual practice, and therefore concludes that Hacı Bektaş and his followers were maintainers of shamanistic traditions[2].

If we opt for another perspective, focusing on Hacı Bektaş and the dervishes as Muslims, we may choose the fact that they circled the fire forty times as our point of departure. According to some of the youngsters, the origin of the Alevi semah is to be found in the legend of Muhammed's ascension to God, *mirac* (Interview January and May 2004, see also Elçi 1999: 171). In this understanding, after having squeezed the single grape and drank the juice together with Muhammad and *the forty,* Ali became exuberant and guided Muhammed in an ecstatic dance, later to be taught to the Alevi villagers. Another way of connecting semah with Muhammed and Ali is explained by the villagers in Shankland's study:

> The villagers say that they were taught how to perform the cem by Ali, and a slow-stepping dance in the cem, the "semah of the forty" commemorates the first men and women who gathered around Ali and learnt from him. Ali, they say, learnt his knowledge from Muhammed, who was commanded by Allah to impart his esoteric knowledge of religion to Ali, and ultimately to the villagers (Shankland 2003: 79).

Whether it was Muhammad or Ali who initiated the teaching of semah, both explanations connect the dances to *the forty*, implying that its inception is to be traced to the foundation of Islam. Therefore, the story of Hacı Bektaş and his followers circling the fire forty times in an ecstatic dance, seems to have strong connotations regarding their adherence to Islam.

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[1]A similar translation in English is to be found in Smith 1971.

[2]For comments on "the tendency to classify most elements in Turkish Sufism as the heritage of Shamanism", see Vorhoff 1998: 27.

What *the forty* refers to, however, may also be a matter of perspective. In the *Alevilik and Bektaşilik Dictionary*, frequently referred to by the Alevilik teacher, *the forty* is defined as dervishes and possessors of divine knowledge which have, like the *Gayb Erenleri*, reached unity with God. They are all considered *arifs* in possession of the mystic knowledge of God, and they are also referred to as *bâtin erenleri*; possessors of the real invisible existence comprehended through withdrawal and contemplation (Korkmaz 2003: 61, 253). According to these definitions, *the forty* join the ranks of the dervishes and mystics who have reached the ultimate goal of Islamic Mysticism, namely the attainment of unity with God through an understanding of the inner meaning of existence.

Melikoff, on the other hand, associates the *Gayib erenleri* with the spiritual helpers of the shaman:

> The juniper-tree [which grew on the summit of the Hırkadağı where Hacı Bektaş and his dervishes danced around the fire] is well known among the shamans. [...] The smoke from the burning branches of the juniper goes to the skies and calls down the "Invisible beings" (Ga'ib Erenleri), the tutelary spirits of the shamans; without those spirits, no ceremony can be performed (Melikoff 1998: 3).

And she finds support for her assertions in the hagiography of Hacı Bektaş:

> In the Vilayetname, a whole chapter is devoted to these "Invisible Beings" who revealed their presence to Hacı Bektaş and his dervishes. They perceived lights burning on the Hırkadağı. They went up and spent three days with the "Invisible Beings". During these three days, time stopped so that nobody in the village was aware of their absence (Melikoff 1998: 3).

This event, and especially the fact that time stood still during the conversations, may resemble the ritual journey of the shaman, but it might also be understood as a symbol of Muhammed's ascension to God. A reconcilable view of the origin of Alevi semah is put forward by And, who states that "As a matter of fact, the Turks knew and had been dancing these dances [semah] for a long time. It was in opposition to the prohibition of dancing after Islam that they were given religious meanings and appearances"(And 2003: 180). *The forty* and *Gayb erenleri* specifically, and the semah dances in general, are thus *multi- expressive symbols* which, in the contexts of contemporary Alevilik, simultaneously refer to Shamanism and Islamic Mysticism. Consequently, those features within Alevilik that are

considered to be remnants of both typical shaman practice and mystic theology are interpreted with reference to one another. These symbols are examples of the necessary links which enable the historical continuation of Alevilik as a Muslim faith. As an Islamic tradition, Alevilik is considered to be the end of an evolutionary development that began with the worship of natural phenomena and has ended with Monotheism. This is how the semah teacher's explanation of one particular dance movement becomes meaningful: "It has always been a symbol of God. Well, earlier it was a symbol of the gods, but that is merely a question of evolutionary development" (see the quotation in the introduction).

The evolutionary development from gods to God fits well with what the Bektaşi Baba who gives the lessons on Islamic Mysticism in the Alevilik course has to say about Islam as encompassing all earlier religions:

> Some of the writers doing research on Alevilik (most of them being Socialists), set forth the idea that Alevilik is not related to Islam, and that the religions before Islam live on within Alevilik with an Islamic guise [...] Even in the Koran, which we believe came from God, expressions which resemble words from religions before Islam; from ancient Greek ideas are to be found. With these similarities, can we say that the Islamic religion is not an original religion, and that it has been copying from other religions? [...] The Koran is in itself the essence and the summary of earlier religions (Keçeli 2004: 6).

During these lessons, the youngsters learn how to interpret Islam as the simultaneous abruption and ultimate aim of the evolutionary development of Alevilik. They are taught that even though

> All religions, and especially the monotheistic religions, appeared with the aim of defending the freedom and fulfilling the rights of the oppressed, [...] every religion, in time, in the hands of the oppressors, has become something not resembling its original state. Religion has become [merely] a ceremony. (Keçeli 2004: 7, 10).

Further, they learn that opposition towards the formalization of Islam, associated not only with Sunni Muslims obeying the five pillars, but also Sunni mystics like Nakşibendi Sufis, was the birth of Mysticism and the basis for its continued existence (Keçeli 2004: 11, 22-23). Alevilik as an Islamic faith is therefore understood as the path of the tarikat, aiming at oneness with God through advancement towards the perfect being, *Insan-ı Kâmil*. According to the Bektaşi Baba, it is a path in which everyone is

required to use their intellect, asking and discussing instead of "praying or repeating the names of God day and night" (Keçeli 2004: 23). Semah in the association, symbolically performed in remembrance of the authentic village practices, is still considered different from the zikir rituals of other mystics. The focus is said to be on intellectual understanding and social unity rather than ecstasy, and the semah teacher's elaboration of the meaning of whirling in Alevi semah illustrates this line of reasoning:

> When we are whirling, our hands reach more outwards than upwards, while the Mevlevis have one hand reaching up towards God and the other down towards the ground. Our communication is between the people, not only between God and man. Our way of doing it symbolizes unity: bir kişi bir toplum. (Interview January 2004).

Humanism

As we have seen, moral perfection of the human being and a natural concern with human relationships, constitute what is considered the essential humanistic character of Alevilik, sustained ever since the first organization of humankind. We will now explore the normative dimension of the evolutionary understanding of Alevilik as an a-historical entity. In other words, we will look at how this "Alevi Humanism" is put forth as the connection between Shamanism, Mysticism and the contemporary Alevi religion. Basically we will consider the question of how and why the knowledge transmitted in the association represents Alevis as being more humanistic than their fellow citizens.

In the notebook for the Alevilik course, we can read about Shamanism as the origin of Alevi social organisation:

> The values of Shamanism were not values created through the development of the civilised people in the civilised land, but the values of the blood-related society before civilisation. These primitive communal values were moved to the Anatolian land by people migrating to the west en masse, and came to life as a productive source in the formation of esoteric philosophy in Asia Minor. In other words, in the Anatolian land; 1) in terms of the liberation of humanity they inspired the esoteric utopia in which there were no private ownership, no social classes and no state; 2) they supported the determinant productive forces in the actual field of production, rebelled against the system driving civilisation, and joined the opposition in the civilised land; 3) they made the largest contribution to the construction and formation of Alevilik-Bektaşilik in the context of human productive forces; 4) they laid the groundwork for the siding of humanitarianism with the people and for equality between man and woman (Korkmaz 2004: 50).

The salient aspect of this paragraph is the emphasis on production, ownership and power. This kind of Marxist/Communist approach to the true nature of Alevilik has also been noted by Ocak in his analysis of Alevi literature (Ocak 1991a). Dividing writers and books into categories according to approaches, methods and theories about the essential character of Alevilik, Ocak characterizes a typical Marxist perspective as follows:

> [...] by considering the phenomenon from a more materialistic perspective, [this approach] argues that Alevilik and Bektaşilik is fundamentally a socio-economic system with its roots in a Communist spirit but in time, through degeneration, its surface has gone to ashes, and that it is necessary to sweep up the ashes and regain its former structure. (Ocak 1991a: 23).

The Communist spirit in question, as we can read from the above paragraph about the original Alevi social organization, is understood as lack of private ownership, social classes and states, and as a production system based on equality. This attitude is identified with the term *rıza* by the semah teacher, a concept which he illustrates with the story of a society where nothing can be purchased with money and everyone consumes according to their needs (Interview May 2004). Meaning "consent, assent, approval" in ordinary parlance, the term also has a religious dimension, closely connected to Alevi traditional practices. On the one hand rıza means "to receive everything coming from God willingly" and "to achieve God's contentment and consent" (Korkmaz 2003: 365). On the other hand, it is associated with a person's peacemaking with himself. As a heart-searching act, the person comes to terms with himself while bowing in front of his spiritual guide. Since rıza can also be social, upholding moral standards of conduct, like the cherished creed *eline, beline, diline sahip ol!* (Be master of your hand, belly and tongue!), and a part of the commitment to the tarikat, self-examination is not only related to personal dedication to God, but has an important social element as well. As a part of the spiritual bookkeeping of the cem ritual, and as a fundamental element in the practice of musahiplik, rıza is the illustrating link between Alevilik and Marxism/Communism:

> — [...] as a matter of fact, Alevilik in Turkey is very close to the political left.
> — How?
> —How? Because there is oppression. I mean there is a lot of oppression. For example, in the Decree of Imam Cafer, [Imam Cafer Buyruğu] there is the concept of rıza. "The city of consent" [Rıza Kenti] Actually, a lot of things like that are defined there. I mean, there is the concept of a country where the aims of Communism can be reached (Interview May 2004).

According to the quotation from the notebook of the Alevilik course, this Marxist oriented Shamanistic origin of Alevi social organization "became the productive source of the esoteric philosophy" (see above). This connection between the social organization of Shamanistic societies and Islamic Mysticism is, as we shall see, a necessary step in a line of reasoning ending with the celebration of Alevilik as a philosophy grounded in Laicism and Humanism[1]. Mysticism, put forward as the education of the perfect human being through an understanding of the true nature of existence, has a moral dimension, namely the obligation of benefiting humanity. According to the teacher of the Islamic Mysticism lessons, A person with external knowledge might be a good person, but that kind of goodness is only valuable for the person himself. A person with internal knowledge, however, tries to be useful and beneficial for the whole humankind (Keçeli 2004: 19).

In line with the normative character of theological exegesis in general, Communism, Shamanism and Mysticism are linked by the understanding that their characteristics are essentially "good", as opposed to something "bad". At the heart of this good quality we find Humanism—a perspective that has been criticized by Ocak, who states that within such a perspective, Alevilik and Bektaşilik seem to have been formed solely on the basis of love for humanity (Ocak 1991a: 23). Approaching the Alevi literature as research publications, Ocak further criticizes what he calls "theories about the true nature of Alevilik and Bektaşilik":

> [The theories which suggest] that Alevilik and Bektaşilik are secular, national, and democratic belief systems, can not be said to reflect either a historical or a scientific reality because none of them are results of a scientific approach, but rather theories with biased and ideological aims. [...] because to be secular is not a description belonging to religion, but to the state's attitude towards religion in democratic systems (Ocak 1990b: 116).

What Ocak ignores in his criticism of these theories is the fact that the Alevi literature does not follow scientific principles, but rather the logic of theological exegesis and the common sense of philosophical reasoning. The evolutionary development of Alevilik and the maintenance of its essential nature throughout history, provide the framework for *multi-expressive statements* like the one below, which makes reference to different "histories of the past" as evidence of the Laicist and Humanist character of contemporary Alevilik:

[1]For further discussion of Alevi Humanism and how it is connected to Laicism, Secularism and the understanding of Turkey as a "secular democracy", see Markussen 2004.

> From one point of view, God is reason, and the body is his manifestation. This understanding, this concept, is the social basis of laicism both in the West and the East . [...] The Alevi philosophy, which is a religion transformed into a philosophy, is the intellectual ground of Laicism. The Alevi social project constitutes, on the other hand, the social foundation of laicism (Korkmaz 2004: 88, 99).

From Shamanism to Humanism – Some Concluding Remarks

The ideas presented in this article are part of a larger project studying the transmission of religious knowledge and traditional practices within an Alevi association in Turkey. Focusing on the way knowledge is passed on through lectures and published literature, and how the young students of the various courses apply that knowledge to their own lives, the examination of the process whereby Alevilik is created as a coherent system of belief has become an important part of the project. This article offers a perspective on this process different from that of mere "identity politics" or the revival of a specific culture. Considering the process as theological interpretation or exegesis, the article focuses on the urban Alevilik finding its form right before our eyes. This is not a transformation entirely connected to the conditions of the modern world. Religions are never static; they change, and have always changed when facing new conditions, and in the hands of people with the power to define the world.

The creation of a coherent Alevi belief system is based upon the underlying notion of evolution. As this article discusses in detail, it is within the framework of this perspective that Alevilik is understood to have existed since the break of dawn. A crucial aspect of the emic understanding of Alevilik is the idea that its essence has been preserved from the beginning of time, even while its various forms and outlooks have developed and changed. The quest, within Alevilik, for this evolutionary development is a selective search, highlighting some epochs and themes, while excluding others. In accordance with the themes that most characterize the teaching of Alevilik within the association, this article has attempted an analysis of Shamanism, Urbanization, Islam and Humanism as the primary influences that are thought to have informed and shaped Alevilik throughout its history. Shamanism is said to represent the first link in this evolutionary framework, and, as such, it is conceived to have been the first social and religious organisation of humankind, connecting the original religion with rural Alevi traditional practices. The Alevi villagers are considered to possess an authentic form of

Alevilik, elements of which can still be recognized in the urban equivalents of traditional institutions like cem (including semah), musahiplik, and dedelik. Although the students and teachers primarily identify themselves as Muslims, the values they cherish as the essence of Alevilik are not directly associated with Islam, and come instead from authentic traditions practiced prior to its appearance. The article thus describes an ambivalent attitude towards Islam within the community—an understanding of Islam as both a rupture of, and end to, the evolutionary process. These two approaches are reconciled, in the teaching of Alevilik, by simultaneous references to the historical invasion of Arab Muslims in Anatolia, and the form of Islam presumed to have been practiced by Anatolian villagers at that time. By combining the historical epoch of the invasion with the universal representation that Alevi Mysticism is the original Islamic faith, encompassing all other religions, the ambivalence of the rupture and the continuation of Alevilik's evolutionary development is resolved. Thus when Alevilik is viewed as the authentic, universal religious belief, its normative dimensions revolve around the antithetical concepts of "good" and "bad". When this is explained within the context of the discourses on Laicism and "secular democracy" in contemporary Turkey, the teachers in the association emphasize the "good", secular and democratic nature of the Alevis in opposition to the "bad", fundamentalist and theocratic nature of Sunni-Islam. In the preceding analysis of this line of reasoning, we have attempted to provide an alternative view on Alevi opposition to Sunni-Islam, seeing it more as a theological rivalry between two versions of Islam, than as a mere result of historical and legendary oppression and violence.

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FESTIVALS AND THE FORMATION OF ALEVI IDENTITY

Mark Soileau

At the fifth annual festival commemorating the thirteenth-century saint Seyyid Hacı Ali Turab-ı Veli Dede, held at the site of his tomb which was bedecked with Turkish flags and pictures of Atatürk for the occasion, the hundreds of spectators heard speeches by local politicians and dignitaries, watched a performance by a local youth group of the spiritual dance of the Alevis – the *semah* – and listened as the poet Dertli Divani sang one of his popular songs about the transitoriness of life, ending with an invocation to Ali and to Hacı Bektaş. Dertli Divani is authorized to function as a *dede* among Çelebi Bektaşis, and uses this authority to conduct *cem*s in communities within his jurisdiction, but likewise also feels free to speak during his musical performances, giving moral advice and instruction in proper ritual practice and belief, and commenting on current events. On this occasion, he spoke briefly on the importance for the Alevi way of not discriminating based on race, religion, language or ethnicity, and made the following observation on Alevi festivals:

> This type of event, you know, is of course highly effective in our people's coming together, coalescing, living in peace and sharing certain values. For centuries up until today, our ancestors have brought this culture, this belief of ours, and passed it on to us. From now on, it is of course our duty to make it live on.

Along with offering a succinct summary of the main functions of these festivals, Divani's words point to an important dimension: the traditional nature of Alevi festivals.

This feature might easily be overlooked if one were to be preoccupied with the apparent incongruities at the festivals – the mix of religious and secular, the politicization, the conflicting interpretations of Alevi history, symbols, and even of what Alevism essentially is – and with how certain elements are disjointed from earlier forms of Alevi belief and practice. If the concept of tradition is used in the sense of what is time-honored, classical and pre-modern, then Alevi festivals today can indeed be seen as combining traditional and modern elements. But it is in the primary sense of tradition –

as the passing down of culture from generation to generation – that Alevi festivals can be seen as unreservedly traditional. This is not to assume that there is a bounded, essential tradition which can be handed down intact like a physical artefact;[1] rather, tradition is the product of a continual process of reinterpreting the past in light of a changing present.

As Dertli Divani noted, these festivals are about Alevis coming together and sharing the values they see as constituting their culture, whether this culture is ultimately construed as a religion, as a revolutionary ideology, or merely as a way of life.[2] Festivals, then, can be categorized, along with the *cem*, as ritual occasions in which elements of Alevi culture and a sense of Alevi identity are passed on to the current generation. What distinguishes the festival from the *cem*, besides obvious structural differences, are its greater degree of openness and its larger scale, which reflect the situation in which Alevis today find themselves. Festivals are adaptations of Alevi cultural heritage to the modern context, and thus serve as important sites for the ongoing process of identity formation. Before analyzing how identity is formed in these events, though, it will be useful first to look at what goes on at them.

Alevi Festivals

In numerous festivals of various sizes throughout Turkey, held usually in the summer months, Alevis come together to celebrate their culture. These festivals usually take place at the site of the tombs of saints associated – directly or indirectly – with Alevi and/or Bektaşi history. The festivals are in fact usually named after the saint and are conceived as commemorations. Thus, while I use the term "festival" for the sake of convenience, these events are usually officially labeled as *anma törenleri*: commemoration ceremonies. The kind of festival considered here, then, can be defined as an annual festival carried out around the tomb of a saint and in his or her commemoration, with a predominantly Alevi attendance, and carrying Alevi discourse and performance of aspects of Alevi ritual.

The importance of these festivals derives from the fact that they serve as the context for the largest gatherings of Alevis in a single place at a single time. This is most clearly evident in the case of the Hacı Bektaş festival,

[1] See Handler and Linnekin 1984 for a criticism of the reification of tradition.
[2] For a discussion of various interpretations of Alevism see Ocak 1996.

which can gather a crowd in the hundreds of thousands, but also, in relative terms, in the case of local festivals. The Ali Turab-ı Veli festival in a village in Çankırı, for instance, only gathers a few hundred people, but this number is still greater than that of local *cem* ceremonies or other communal events. Because of the physical presence of large numbers of people with common sensibilities, the performance of culture which occurs at these festivals reaches an increased magnitude, and it is here that the continuing formation of an Alevi identity can perhaps be most effective. The number of such festivals increases every year, and the regularity of their annual repetition, along with similarities between festivals, indicate a growing institutionalization and the development of the festival as a legitimate form of Alevi cultural performance.

Despite differences in size and focus, Alevi festivals tend to share certain features. They are generally held in the summer months – in order to facilitate attendance, but also perhaps as a continuation of older celebrations related to seasonal migrations. Though some festivals take place on the presumed birth day of the saint being commemorated – such as the Veli Baba festival in August (Karatürk 1983: 102) – most have no direct connection with the biography of the saint. Many festivals occur on weekends, in order to increase attendance, though some, like Hacı Bektaş, occur every year on the same dates, and many Alevis arrange their vacations accordingly in order to attend.

As most of these festivals are centered around the tomb of a saint, a visit (*ziyaret*) to the tomb – complete with the traditional practices of circumambulating and kissing the sarcophagus, recitation of prayers, lighting of candles, tying of strips of cloth to nearby tree branches, etc. – is generally performed, and would be the first order of business for all attendees, if not for the impossibility of accommodating the sometimes thousands of visitors at the same time. Another customary tomb visitation practice that is maintained during festivals is the sacrifice (*kurban*) of an animal, usually a sheep, either in fulfilment of a vow (*adak*) or as an offering to the saint to mark the visit. The selling of sacrificial sheep often amounts to an important additional source of income for locals, and the donation of skins to the organizations which sponsor the festivals contributes to the development of the festival or to village facilities.

Once the meat is cooked and distributed to those present, passersby and the poor, it is considered *lokma* – consecrated food – the eating of which is deemed incumbent on those to whom it is offered. Beyond this common

practice, the distribution of food – usually *pilav* – to all attendees has become part of the official program of some festivals. In the case of the Veli Baba Sultan festival in a village near Isparta, the distribution of *pilav* to all present is performed in commemoration of a miracle attributed to the saint Veli Baba, who is said to have fed an entire army with one bowl of *pilav* (Karatürk 1983: 103). The Hacı Bektaş festival includes as part of its festivities the distribution of *aşure*, the sweet soup which Alevis and Bektaşis prepare and distribute to commemorate the Kerbela tragedy in the Islamic month of Muharrem.

Along with these tomb-related practices, more specifically Alevi forms of ritual are adapted to the festival context – most notably those involving poetry, music and dance. No Alevi festival would be complete without performances by *ozan*s and *semah* troupes. Indeed, the main orientation at most festivals is centered around a stage and an organized program of acts in the form of a concert. Continuity between acts is provided by announcers, who often read poems in addition to introducing performers. Because of the stage format and large audiences, all but the very smallest festivals employ microphones and sound systems. Some festivals also present theatrical representations of historical events and figures which have become landmarks in the Alevi conception of their history, such as the Kerbela tragedy, the martyrdom of Pir Sultan Abdal, and the lives of mystics such as Hacı Bektaş, Yunus Emre, and Kaygusuz Abdal.

Combining elements of all of these types of performance are the staged *cem*s conducted at many festivals. These are often organized by *dernek*s and represent the local *cem* traditions of their organizers, or a blend of traditions if the organizers are from different regions. Sometimes the *cem*s are staged by a group from a particular village, and thus represent a single local tradition, but as these are open to spectators and/or participants from other regions, the regulations which bind the local *cem*, in which all participants know each other and how to act, are necessarily relaxed. However, though there is often confusion as to when to stand up or prostrate oneself, who should rise to dance the *semah* and how, and when to be quiet, for many, especially young people, this is the first opportunity to attend a *cem*, and there is a great deal of respect and interest. As in a village *cem*, in these staged rituals the *dede*s perform traditional services, such as advising those in attendance as to how to act, think and believe as an Alevi.

Much of what goes on in Alevi festivals, however, is not based directly in Alevi ritual. Most noticeably, festivals serve as a platform for the display of politics. The cultural program at most festivals is preceded by official opening ceremonies in which local and national politicians, political party representatives and bureaucrats make their presence known by praising the saint and his humanist philosophy and seeking support from those in attendance. Alevi dignitaries, such as *dedes* or *dernek* presidents, often speak as well, and have occasionally been known to publicly challenge the politicians on their failure to adequately acknowledge Alevi concerns. While many traditional-minded Alevis complain that all of this politicking detracts from the real purpose of the festival – to commemorate the saint – such speech-making does serve as an opportunity for Alevi leaders to voice their attitudes on issues currently concerning the community, such as opposition to mandatory religious lessons in public schools. In this way, Alevi leaders can establish or maintain their influence over the audience.

Other non-ritual elements include the commerce which inevitably takes place. This too can contribute to the formation of Alevi identity, when the merchandise consists of souvenirs bearing symbols associated with Alevi culture; but often as well the festival becomes a convenient site for the selling of secular goods such as household items. The festivals also often feature academic panels on various aspects of Alevi history, culture and politics, which appeal to many Alevis seeking to understand their culture in a more intellectual way.

While many visitors travel on their own to the festivals, others avail themselves of the bus tours organized by Alevi *dernek*s. These frequently stop along the way at the tombs of other saints, indicating that the trip is a form of pilgrimage. The *dernek*s also help to promote the festivals, as festival organizers usually send announcements and posters to *dernek*s nationwide in order to increase attendance. The festivals themselves are an important means of communicating news of upcoming festivals through the posting of announcements.

It will thus be seen that there is much that goes on at Alevi festivals, and many functions are served. Festivals provide the context for all of these micro-events, all of which contribute to the transmission of knowledge and behavior patterns, yet allow for their adaptation according to modern exigencies. In addition to these specific functions, festivals provide an opportunity for the community to come together, which is especially

important now that Alevi villages have to a large extent dispersed. People who have migrated to the cosmopolitan cities of Turkey or to Europe, who might have limited access to other ritual events, can experience Alevi culture in this form. This is especially important for Alevi youths, many of whom are eager to maintain their culture. Festivals also provide a context for local musicians and poets to perform their art and make their names known. They further help to support the development of local facilities, such as village libraries and cultural centers.

All of these functions operate through the gathering of large numbers of Alevis in a celebration of Alevi culture, a need which reflects the traditional Alevi value of unity, which has kept the community distinct through centuries of non-acceptance and suppression by the outside world. Most festivals are adorned with banners reiterating messages indicating the importance of unity: Pir Sultan Abdal's call "Come, friends, let's be one!",[1] Hacı Bektaş's "Let's be one, let's be vigorous, let's be great!",[2] and the sign displayed at Çamşıh "Welcome to Respect, Brotherhood and Friendship!"[3] are clear examples. Alevi festivals overlap the categories of traditional and modern, religious and secular, communal and national, local and universal, in both form and content – and this is an accurate representation of the current Alevi situation. But they are also sites for the development of Alevi culture, and what goes on at the festivals can influence how Alevis see themselves as a distinct community.

The Modern Development of Alevi Public Events

The elaborate celebration of Alevi culture in public is necessarily a recent phenomenon; it would no doubt have been rare in the period between the Ottoman-Safavid conflicts of the sixteenth century and the foundation of the modern Republic of Turkey. But as Alevi communities often existed in remote areas, it would have been possible for Alevis to gather outside of the closed doors of the *cem* and worship in various ways, and in these ceremonies we may find roots of the large-scale and open festivals we see today. While historical documentation on such events is scarce or has not been adequately studied, we may infer from ethnographic evidence that outdoor celebrations

[1] "Gelin canlar bir olalım."
[2] "Bir olalım, diri olalım, iri olalım."
[3] "Saygıya kardeşliğe dostluğa hoş geldiniz."

surrounding the visiting of saints' tombs,[1] and annual occasions such as Nevruz, Hıdrellez, and the preparation of *aşure* to commemorate the martyrdom of Husayn have taken place for centuries, many of them being performed by nominal Sunnis as well.[2] In some situations these celebrations may have been accompanied by the singing of hymns *(deyiş)* to music and dancing of the *semah*.[3]

The *cem* ritual was the primary force in instilling a sense of Alevi identity in the community: one saw oneself as part of a distinct social and ritual community bounded by the walls of the *cemevi* (and usually with a guard *(bekçi)* outside to prevent the intrusion of foreigners), and understood one's position in the system by experiencing where one was seated in the *cem*. The auditory effect of music and kinetic effect of dancing the *semah* served to make the experience all the more fulfilling and memorable. In such an atmosphere the teachings of the *dede* and those contained in the songs could effectively be instilled in participants.

It is difficult to judge the validity of this generalized picture of the traditional *cem* without more microhistories of local Alevi communities and collected oral histories of older Alevis.[4] But it is clear that with the Kemalist principle of secularism and increased access to education and public life after the founding of the Republic, and especially with the mass migrations of Alevis to the cities and to Europe beginning in the 1950's, Alevis have attained a public exposure far exceeding the status they held during Ottoman rule. Though they have still not reached full acceptance at the national level, Alevis today feel freer to express their Aleviness, and this increased openness is reflected in the public performance of elements of Alevi ritual.

Alevi *aşık*s had taken part in celebrations of Turkish folk music since the early years of the Republic (Bozkurt 2000: 79), but it was not until the 1960's that Alevi culture *per se* began to be celebrated in public. By this time

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[1]Such visits are certainly a very ancient form of worship, and are still prevalent in Turkey. For a summary of practices at saint tombs in Turkey, see Hasluck's chapter on "Cult of the Dead", 2000, Vol. 1, pp. 221—238. See also Tanyu 1967.

[2]See Önal 2003 for a description of seasonal celebrations, mostly by nominal Sunnis, on mountains associated with saints.

[3]There are historical accounts of dervish celebrations that involved music and *semah* dancing, such as that at Seyyid Gazi (see Köprülü 1935: 32—36, and Faroqhi 1981: 112). After the Ottoman persecutions of the sixteenth century, the Abdals involved were probably later absorbed into the communities that came to be known as Kızılbaş (Köprülü 1935: 36).

[4]A good start was provided by İsmail Kaygusuz's *Son Görgü Cemi*. More accounts of this type would be invaluable to the historian of Alevism.

Alevis had formed sizeable communities in the larger cities of Turkey and were beginning to organize. While Alevis were settling in the cities, they continued to face the slanderous rumors to which they had long been subject, especially the infamous *mum söndü* legend, according to which they were said to put out the candles during the *cem* and participate in orgies and even incest. References to this appeared in newspaper articles and even served as the title and subject of a play staged in Istanbul (Ibid.: 76). In response, Alevi student groups began to form in Istanbul and Ankara, and conferences were organized on the issues of secularism and the rights of Alevis.[1] The 1960's also saw the opening of the first Alevi *dernek*s and the reopening of the Bektaşi *dergâh* of Karacaahmet Sultan as an Alevi *dernek*, the publication of the first Alevi newspapers and magazines, and the launching of an Alevi political party.[2] Public performances of Alevi music also began in this period, in the form of concerts: Kaleli mentions a "*cem* ceremony" held at a cinema in Ankara in 1963, with the well-known *aşık*s Veysel, Davut Sulari, Daimi, Feyzullah Çınar, and Mahzuni Şerif, followed in 1965 by a "Hacı Bektaş Night" in Malatya (Kaleli 2000: 18-19). Bozkurt describes a concert honoring the poet Şah Hatayî in Ankara in 1966, which along with poetry readings and musical performances by *aşık*s like Nesimi Çimen, included a brief *semah* display (Bozkurt 2000: 80). Though the authorities were disturbed by the focus on Şah Hatayî (the pen name of Shah Isma'il, long considered an enemy of the Ottomans/Turks) and the involvement of certain performers with leftist political parties, the concert seems to have positively impressed the crowds who filled the theater (Ibid.: 80-81).

The earliest open saint-oriented Alevi festival seems to have been that commemorating Hacı Bektaş, the most widely revered saint for Alevis. After having been closed along with all other *dergâh*s in Turkey in 1925, The Hacı Bektaş *dergâh* was officially opened as a museum on 16 August 1964, and it is in fact this opening that technically continues to be commemorated every year on 16-18 August. The early years saw elements associated with Bektaşi tradition (e.g. Janissary bands) and totally unrelated spectacles (like motorcycle exhibitions) (Norton 1995: 192), which declined as the festival became a site for the display of leftist politics in the politically-charged 1970's, (Norton 1983: 81) which has in turn been moderated in the post-1980 period. Today, the main focus is on Alevi culture – especially music, poetry and *semah* – though politics is still present.

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[1]These newspapers articles, statements and conference proceedings were collected by Özbey and published in 1963.

[2]For histories of Alevi organization in the modern period, see Kaleli 2000, and Şener and İlknur 1995.

Since the 1960's, the desire of Alevis to celebrate their culture has increased, though religious elements have often taken a back seat to the arts. The festival format has proven suitable to the celebration of poetry, music and dance, and Alevi festivals have proliferated and spread to all regions of the country. With the Hacı Bektaş festival as a model, these have mostly been associated with a saint, and take place at the site of his or her tomb. As such tombs have long been sites of Alevi pilgrimage, this location ensures a continuity with Alevi cultural heritage and provides a reasonably secure context for the expression of Alevi culture. The importance of such a context was demonstrated in 1993 in Sivas.

The city of Sivas, like many provincial centers in central Anatolia, is a conservative Sunni-dominated city surrounded by both Sunni and Alevi villages.[1] The province is known for producing folk poet-musicians, one of the earliest being Pir Sultan Abdal, the sixteenth-century mystic and martyr whose legends are associated with defiance against the Ottoman regime and support of the Safavids. A festival commemorating him had been staged twice in Pir Sultan's village just before the 1980 military coup, and resumed in 1992. For the fourth occasion, in 1993, organizers decided to move the festival to the provincial center of Sivas. On the second day of the festival – 2. July, a Friday – protests by radical Islamists began after Friday prayers. By the evening a violent mob shouting Islamist slogans had formed outside the hotel where festival performers were staying and – ostensibly to lynch the writer Aziz Nesin, who had recently published a translation of parts of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* – eventually set fire to the hotel. Though Nesin and others managed to escape, thirty-four people, including well-known musicians, artists, intellectuals, and several youths from a *semah* group, were burned to death or died of asphyxiation, three citizens of Sivas were killed by gunfire, and dozens were injured in the fire.[2] While many factors contributed to this tragedy, it is clear that the city of Sivas was not prepared to host the celebration of Pir Sultan Abdal, Alevi culture, and elements of a wider politico-cultural matrix to which some Alevis aspire. The following year, the festival resumed back in Pir Sultan Abdal's village.

The massacre at Sivas has become the most commemorated event of recent Alevi history, from the massive rally in Ankara immediately following

[1]For an account of Alevis and Sunnis in Sivas, set in the context of Sivas history, see Coşkun 1995. For a comparison of Alevi and Sunni villages in the region, see Shankland 2003.

[2]Several books in Turkish describe and analyze the Sivas incident, among them Kaleli 1994 and the *Sivas Kitabı*. Coşkun 1995 sets the incident in the context of Sivas history.

the incident to the annual marches in various cities on 2. July. Posters, flyers and exhibitions are continually produced, recounting the events, remembering the victims by including photographs and short biographies, and placing the event in the long line of massacres and injustices with which Alevis associate their history: the martyrdoms of Husayn, Mansur al-Hallaj, Nesimî, and Pir Sultan Abdal, the massacres in various provinces in Turkey in the 1970's, and later the attacks in the Gazi suburb of Istanbul in 1995. The incident has also had the effect of increasing the interest of Alevis in expressing their identity as Alevis and in organizing. Sociologist Şehriban Şahin notes the dramatic increase in *dernek*s in the year following the Sivas massacre, and reports that most *dernek* members she interviewed in Europe and in Turkey cited the massacre as the principal reason for their joining.[1] This has been accompanied by an increase in the number of Alevi festivals as well, with new festivals arising almost every year since then. What tragic events like that at Sivas can achieve is a mass rallying of support for fellow Alevis, a willingness on the part of individuals to express their identities as Alevi, and the motivation to organize for the sake of collective expression of this identity in public. That such expressions can be made in public on a grand scale has been made possible by the increased acceptance of Alevis today, but at the same time this acceptance has been achieved in part because Alevis have sought to express their identity. The potential for increasing the scale and innovating the form of these expressions has been demonstrated by recent mega-concerts like the *Binyılın Türküsü* ("Saga of the Millenium") events in Germany and in Istanbul, in which more than 1000 *bağlama* players performed on stage along with scores of *semah* dancers, a symphony orchestra, and various other acts – all framed within prayers from the traditional *cem.*

Continuity and Change

While the modern assertion of an Alevi identity in the public sphere in Turkey has been galvanized by traumatic events like those at Sivas and Gazi, there are other factors which contribute to the process, one of them being a more general interest on the part of Alevis to maintain their culture. Cemal Şener notes that part of the motivation behind festivals is the fact that for centuries Alevis, due to prohibitions, were only allowed to worship in secret:

[1] Şahin 2002: 132–133, 140. Arif Sağ, in an interview on the Sivas massacre (which he experienced first-hand), also notes the effect it had on Alevis taking charge of their own identity (Koçak 2003: 30).

> Thus, one of the reasons bringing thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of Anatolian Alevis together in various commemoration ceremonies is the desire, the longing to perform their own beliefs, their own rituals openly. (Şener 1992: 132).

If such festivals are in fact the product of a desire to perform Alevi rituals in the open, then it is hardly surprising that they contain both traditional elements and modifications which the new open format demands.

That these festivals are in part a continuation of older forms of worship is most evident in the fact that they take place at the tombs of saints and are designed as commemorations of the saints. The fact that most such festivals are titled *anma törenleri* (the Turkish verb *anmak* meaning to remember, to call to mind, or – in the context of public events – to commemorate) indicates that the they are structured around the reenactment of the memory of the saint in question, thereby bringing back the traditional Alevi element of venerating saints. This commemorative act then serves as a traditional basis upon which modern elements can be superimposed, thus legitimating transformation in the adapting of Alevism to modern exigencies. In this way, memory works together with repeated performance to ensure continuity through change, which is the basis for the persistence of identity. The *anma törenleri* are thus not just commemorations of saints; they are also – and perhaps more importantly – commemorations of Alevi culture. These celebrations refresh Alevi identity in the hearts and minds of participants, though this identity is one reformulated to keep Alevi culture in step with Alevi perceptions of their role in the development of national and international life.[1]

Most festival-goers include a visit to the shrine, and for many, attendance at the festival itself constitutes a *ziyaret*. The only two books I have come across that specifically treat Alevi festivals (Şener 1992 and Kahraman 2002 – both writers being Alevi) weave their descriptions of festival events and accounts of saint histories, legends and traditions into pilgrimage narratives. Describing her bus tour, organized by an Alevi *dernek*, from Istanbul to the Hacı Bektaş festival, Kahraman recounts:

> After visiting the tomb of Hasan Dede and taking a necessary rest stop, our convoy proceeded toward the town of Keskin. As our principle was to visit the tombs along the route, the second stop according to our program was the tomb of Haydar Sultan, near Keskin. (Kahraman 2002: 66).

[1] On social memory, commemoration and performance, see Connerton 1989.

Şener likewise mentions visiting various tombs along the way to Abdal Musa, at one such stop a *cem* being performed (Şener 1992: 39-40), and notes that after arrival at Abdal Musa and a visit to the tomb, his group was greeted by villagers saying "Welcome, may your *ziyaret* be accepted, do you have a place to stay?"[1] It is clear, then, that for many these are not just trips to a secular festival, but pilgrimages, spiritual journeys. As noted earlier, festivals always include elements from traditional forms of Alevi worship, especially music, poetry and *semah*, and often as well full-scale *cems*.

In many cases, these festivals are intended specifically to be traditional, such as the "Keçeci Baba Geleneksel Kültür Festivali" (Traditional Culture Festival). Other organizations stress the cultural aspect of their festival, such as with the "Hıdır Abdal Sultan 5. Kültür Etkinliği" (Fifth Culture Event), which is thus designed as a celebration of culture – another way of intentionally drawing on tradition.

Though these festivals incorporate elements of traditional Alevi rituals, the festival context necessitates changes in their presentation, and a comparison between the traditional *cem* and the modern festival exposes many contrasts. First of all, the *cem* was closed to strangers and held at night in order not to attract attention, while the festival begins in the daytime and is necessarily open to all who may care to attend, and is reported by the media. In fact, most Alevis are eager to have their culture presented to the world. The staging of activities also changes: while the *cem* was conducted with participants seated along the walls facing inward toward the center (and thus facing each other), festival activities are mostly presented out toward an audience, who are oriented unidirectionally toward a stage, which is separated from the seating area. Thus, while the *cem* was geared towards face-to-face interaction, in the festival performers look out into an anonymous audience, and the audience focuses on performers, rather than on the event as a whole. Music and dance performances are indeed usually presented in the form of concerts, but even when festivals include *cems*, they still tend to present the *cem* before an audience, as if it were a theatrical performance.[2] One effect of these differences is that festival-goers are less participants in the ceremony than spectators of it.

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[1]"Hoş geldiniz, ziyaretiniz kabul ola, kalacağınız yer var mı?" Şener 1992: 46.

[2]Festivals also often spawn *cems* which more closely resemble what I am here describing as "traditional," by providing a spiritual site for members of a certain community to conduct a *cem*. Many tombs where festivals are held have adjacent *cemevis* for this purpose.

The distance between spectators and those who are charged with performing is increased by the stage setting, and also by the growing professionalization of the performers. The most favored musicians are those who have established recording careers, and *semah*s are usually performed by youths who have trained at courses, and are usually choreographed and rehearsed. The institutional hierarchy of the *cem* has also been altered: whereas in the *cem*, *semah* dancers would bow to the *dede* when passing in front of him, when a *semah* is performed on stage, dancers usually bow to the singer, unless there is someone playing the role of a *dede*. In festivals, then, ritual elements take on the features of public display, and this transposition onto the stage has brought changes in how these elements are structured, presented, and taught.

The modern elements and openness of Alevi public ritual reflect changes in Alevi social structure, as changes such as the mass migration from isolated villages to open cities have brought a transformation of the appropriate context for such rituals. Identities are now formed among individuals from various local origins, so while migration may have caused a breakup of traditional structure, it has at the same time brought about an extension of Alevi identity from a sense of being part of a local community in which members personally knew each other to a sense of being part of a larger, national (and for some, global) collectivity sharing certain values, beliefs and rituals. While formulating an identity of self-ascription in conformity with their situation in the modern Republic of Turkey, Alevis are also today making their identity known to non-Alevis. Though in the past Alevis had to perform their culture in secret, behind closed doors, nowadays they increasingly find themselves (or sometimes intentionally place themselves) in the national spotlight – on stage – and consequently performance of their rituals begins to take on more characteristics of public display.

Festivals, then, are ideal sites for the blending of tradition and change, because of their openness and their multimedia format, which allows for new technologies of expression and the modern forms which they bring. Alevi festivals are complexes of identity-forming events, which reflect the multiple roles involved in modern life. They can then be seen as adaptations of elements of traditional Alevi rituals to the modern situation Alevis find themselves in, which is one of openness. But it is this very adaptation that allows tradition to continue, for tradition is the product of an ongoing process of continuity and change. Celebrations of Alevi culture can be traditional only

to the extent that they both maintain a continuity with accepted understandings of the past and conform with understandings of the present situation.

Conclusion: Festivals and Identity Formation

In festivals, the context for the commemoration is set as Alevi, the participants are understood as Alevi, and the expressions which are made utilize symbols that recall beliefs, ideals, persons and historical events associated with Alevism. These factors then interact to form the process of shared experience. No Alevi today has directly, personally experienced the martyrdoms of Husayn, Nesimî, or Pir Sultan Abdal, and relatively few were present at the Sivas massacre in 1993. But they share an indirect, communal experience of these events when the events are commemorated in their presence and in the context of association with a community that gives the experience meaning. This traditional repertoire of shared experience – what Berger and Luckmann call a "common stock of knowledge"(Berger and Luckmann 1966: 69) – is also objectified in many other forms, such as in written media, and there too shared experience can blend with the individual's own direct experience of discrimination, oppression or pain. But it is in occasions of face-to-face physical interaction especially that the individual experiences a communal link to the memory of the event, and in ritual especially that the event comes alive. What festivals add to this process is the association of great numbers of Alevis in a single place and time, thereby providing the context for the physical interaction that is most effective in making identity real, magnifying the scale of the community of which the individual feels a part, and fusing the individual and communal aspects of Alevi identity. What emerges from the process of shared experience is Alevi identity – not, of course, the initial phenomenon of an Alevi identity, but the most recent moment in an ongoing process of identity formation, ultimately in the individual, but as part of the community.

An identity does not exist independently of human thought and feeling. It must be perceived for it to be real. To be perceived it has to be experienced, and for it to be experienced, it has to be performed. When it is performed in the midst of a group sharing the same culture, it becomes a communal identity. The shared experience of cultural performance then involves a reflexivity – seeing oneself through the mirror of the other, especially in mutual participation in a cultural event. As Kapferer observes: "I understand

the experience of the other directly through my experience and indirectly through the mediation of a variety of cultural constructs" (Kapferer 1986: 190). Though Alevi culture is increasingly expressed in written form, it also continues to be expressed in social gatherings involving face-to-face interaction, such as informal *muhabbet* gatherings, *dernek* meetings, and of course *cems* – and these are necessary for the reflexivity which promotes the physical sense of communal identity.[1]

While the Alevism expressed in indirect, distant media like books, magazines, radio and television must have a basis in a socially-accepted perception of tradition and contemporary actuality in order for it to be favorably received, the importance of this requirement is amplified in situations of face-to-face interaction, since disapproval would be instantaneous and direct. Bauman has pointed out with respect to cultural performances that the performer is responsible to the audience for competence in socially-appropriate communication, and thus subject to evaluation (Bauman 1977). In the Alevi case, if the festival were to include some element that most Alevis consider un-Alevi – such as instruments associated with Turkish classical music, rather than the traditional folk *bağlama* – the performance itself would not be accepted as Alevi. It must be noted, though, that this is true for elements considered decidedly antagonistic to Alevi culture, such as those associated with Ottoman culture or Sunni Islam. Western instruments like guitars and synthesizers fare better, since they provide a link to the "modern" world to which most Alevis today aspire, though their acceptance is facilitated when they accompany the *bağlama*. The combination of *bağlama* and guitar reflects to an Alevi audience where they are coming from and where they hope to go, and it is out of this reflexivity that modifications of tradition – i.e. change – can take place at the level of identity.[2] Of course there are many agents behind all of these developments – individuals and organizations, often politically motivated – which make the ultimate choices for what is presented at festivals in the name of Alevis. But for these choices to be accepted by Alevis they have to be in line with what Alevis consider to be appropriate, i.e. that which is considered traditional, or that which tends toward the direction in which most Alevis want to move.

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[1] On performative reflexivity, see Turner 1987.

[2] My use of these examples derives from generalizations designed to illustrate the process of performative reflexivity, and these are not to be taken as universally applicable. Alevis, of course, have varying perceptions as to what Alevism is, where it comes from, and where it should go.

Cultural performances like those at festivals are especially effective occasions for this kind of reflexivity because of their framing. They are bounded events, with a beginning and an end, and set on a stage; the attention of the audience is then focused on the activities which occur within this frame. This allows them to be objectified, set apart from everyday life, and the meanings they elicit to be highlighted in an intensified form and made consciously or unconsciously real. As MacAloon suggests, "Whatever performances do, or are meant to do, they do by creating the conditions for, and by coercing the participants into, paying attention."[1] The use of the expressive arts of music, poetry and dance obviously contributes to the focusing of attention, especially since artistic expression has gained ascendancy over religious elements as a standard of Alevi culture.

Festivals, then, do not just show – they enact, perform, objectify, realize. In them, the symbols that carry Alevi meanings create an arena within which Alevis reflect and act. Alevis see themselves within the Alevi world, and identity is thus formed through being performed. As important sites for the continuing formation of an Alevi identity through a process of interpreting the past within the present, it is likely that festivals will continue to develop, if Alevi identity is to be passed on to succeeding generations and thus perpetuated. As a large banner posted by the Union of Alevi-Bektaşi Organizations at the Hüseyin Gazi festival in Ankara in 2001 declared: "SEMAH DÖNMEYE, DEYİŞ SÖYLEMEYE DEVAM EDECEĞIZ" (We will keep on dancing *semah* and singing *deyiş*).

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[1] MacAloon 1984: 10. On the importance of framing in performance, see Bauman 1977. For a discussion of the reflexivity that comes through framing, see Turner 1977.

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ALEVISM IN THE 1960S: SOCIAL CHANGE AND MOBILISATION

Elise Massicard

Introduction

The decades following the Second World War were ones of crucial social change in Turkey. By the end of the 1950s, the social and political landscape of the country was transformed by demographic growth, expansion of education, development of industry, and massive migration to the cities and foreign countries. Settled mainly in the countryside, Alevis experienced this process of social change, which was characterised by urbanisation, social differentiation, the breaking down of former communities, and, more specifically, by the weakening of religious practice. Thus, in the 1960s they established closer contact with the "broader country" and partly lost their specificity.

However, the same years also witnessed the first Alevi public mobilisation of the Republican era, which initially had cultural dimensions centered around reviews and cultural events, and then political ones with the first "Alevi party", The Unity Party (BP/TBP)[1]. These developments may be considered as the indirect result of social change, and of the new conditions brought about by the multiparty system, political liberalisation and growing pluralism. Based on publications of the time[2], interviews with people involved in this movement, and field work mainly in Sivas, this contribution first of all aims at giving a precise, descriptive account of these processes. Moreover, it tries to understand those who were the carriers and supporters of

[1] *Birlik Partisi* (BP) created in 1966, later changed to TBP (*Türkiye Birlik Partisi*, Unity Party of Turkey).

[2] I want to express my gratitude to Michael Meeker for his very valuable comments on a previous version of this text. I also thank the editor and bookseller Adil Ali Atalay, his son, as well as the lawyer Hasan Gülşan and the researcher Ali Yaman for providing issues of these publications - which are not conserved in any public library - in Istanbul cellars and private archives. Finally, I thank the lawyers Hasan Basri Özbey and Muslim Özcan for giving me important documentation on TBP from their private archives.

this movement. Finally, it attempts to provide an historical perspective, thus enabling comparisons with the contemporary Alevist[1] movement.

Migration and Social Change

Kemalist reforms extended the control mechanisms of the State to previously almost autonomous regions. The integration of formerly peripheral regions into industrial production, the construction of transport and communication networks, and the introduction of obligatory schooling progressively put an end to the spatial and social marginality of many Alevis, and brought about a growing interaction with the centre (Kehl-Bodrogi 1988: 56).

This interaction further increased with migration. Because of "push" factors like rural overpopulation, fragmentation of land ownership and mechanisation brought by the Marshall plan, as well as "pull" factors such as the growing demand for industrial labour force, better quality of public services and the presence of educational opportunities in cities and towns, a large-scale rural depopulation began as early as the 1950s. Official authorities then considered urbanisation as a necessary step in the modernisation process, and strove to foster it. In 1950, about 25% of Turkey's population lived in urban areas, and this percentage increased to 42% in 1975. In 1950, only 8,3% of the population lived outside its birthplace, but this percentage reached 19,2% in 1980 (Cerit 1986). Between 1965 and 1970, the urban growth rate exceeded 6%, for a total population growth of 2,52%. This migration was regionally differentiated; it was first very strong in the Black Sea region, then in central Anatolia at the end of the 1960s. Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir were the main destinations. One consequence of this rapid urbanisation was the emergence, in urban areas, of an illegal form of housing, the *gecekondu*. According to Karpat, at the beginning of the 1960s, 59,2% of Ankara's population, 45% of Istanbul's, and 33,4% of Izmir's lived in *gecekondu* housing. Massively rural at that time, Alevis were strongly influenced by this migration wave. Alevis migrated relatively earlier and more massively than Sunnis, because they lived in disadvantaged regions (Karpat 1976: 260).

[1] I distinguish Aleviness (and Alevis), meaning the social phenomenon, from Alevism (and Alevists), which refers to the movement in the name of Aleviness, in the same way Islam and Islamism are distinguished.

Social Change and Social Differentiation

There exists little data to account for the scale of the social upheavals that accompanied the migration. A journalist of the time, Fikret Otyam, has given an account of social differentiation in the Alevi village *Karaözü* of the Sivas province, which he visited in 1963. As early as 1928, the villagers had built a school by their own means, and the village's literacy rate amounted to 98% (whereas the national average was less than 50%). In only fifteen years, the village had produced 347 civil servants, of which 132 were teachers educated in the Pazarören *köy enstitüsü*[1]. The majority of those who had left the village (82 persons) were employed in the railways, but there were also 44 civil servants in the health sector, 37 officers, 24 policemen, and fifteen bank employees. There were more than one hundred students in the village as well. Karaözü hosted six associations and a co-operative of agricultural credit founded in 1952, which brought together six surrounding villages and supplied its 900 members with credits. In the 330 houses, there were no less than 400 radios and 100 sewing machines. In the five coffee-houses, one could find more than thirteen dailies and many magazines. Of course, we have to assume that this village was more flourishing than the average; as a matter of fact, its income came first of all from agricultural production (notably market gardening), but also from the seventeen grocers, the bakery, and even a hotel (Otyam 1982 [1963]: 124-126).

Obviously, this picture, which hardly hides the author's biased focus on development, did not hold true for all villages, and certainly not for all Alevi villages. Others had a more contentious or distanced relation to the state. An Alevi from the Sivas region confessed: "my family [...] did not want to let me study, for it did not trust the state and those things." (Interview December 2nd 2000). However, this picture indicates some trends, like the importance some Alevis gave to education as a means of social mobility. As a consequence, the new employment opportunities released by the public sector, in the context of the development of the administration, gained a special importance as a source of jobs since there was hardly any Alevi bourgeoisie, craftsmen or merchants. As a matter of fact, employment in the public industries in Sivas (the railway yard and the cement factory) had been massively occupied by Alevis since their opening in the 1940s. Alevis' early integration into these jobs opened employment possibilities and facilities for

[1]Created in the 1940s, village institutes had to train teachers for village schools. They were closed by the DP government in the early 1950s. See Öztürkmen 1998: 65-67.

their parents and friends as well[1]. Thus, strategies of social ascension through integration into the system, especially in civil service and factories, developed. Civil service, as well as liberal professions (doctors, lawyers, engineers) accessible through good school results, were therefore privileged by many Alevis. Of course, factors limiting the chances of socially disadvantaged children applied to Alevis as much as to anyone else. Nevertheless, the ambition to acquire positions of influence often incited Alevis to mobilise all the resources of the family in order to facilitate those who had success as early as primary school. Those who profited from this help then became lawyers, teachers, officers or even MPs, and as such, became resources for those who had helped them (Gökalp 1980: 759).

Moreover, as early as the late 1950s, Alevi craftsmen and merchants appeared in Sivas. The son of a Sunni grocer from Sivas remembers as follows:

> In the 1950s, Alevis began opening shops in Sivas. It was a new, unprecedented event. I remember, my father was a grocer at Sivas market, and one day, in the early 1960s, an Alevi came and opened a shop at the market (...). The guild did not know what to do; they consulted each other: would they apply the same rules to Alevis? (Interview September 29th 1999).

Those Alevis who did not take advantage of education could rise by other means:

> In 1965, as I was 30 years old, I came and settled in Sivas. I worked in a cafe, then, after two years, I opened my own cafe. Then I began to sell milled fittings for buildings. It's a good business, of quality and that pays well. (Interview December 2nd 2000).

This trend strengthened in the 1970s with the rise of remittances from relatives in Europe and the return of workers from Germany (Rittersberger-Tılıç 1998), allowing many Alevis to settle as merchants or independent craftsmen in the cities.

[1]Acquaintance was a widespread means of recruitment (Çoşkun 1995: 268-271).

Secularisation and Decline of Religious Practices

Migration and social differentiation induced a weakening of Alevi religious practice, and, especially in urban environments, many Alevi rituals were abandoned. This may be explained in terms of different factors.

Village communities and the relations between *dede* and *talip*, which were the framework for religious practice, were dismantled by migration: "Before, we were conducting *cem* every winter in the village. But with migration, it was not possible any more, and we could only do it every third or fifth year. (Interview with a dede from Sivas, November 27th 2000)". The *dede* had no means of continuing to supervise their emigrant flock all over the country or even in Europe. Because it became harder to earn their living through purely religious activities, they had to find other forms of work, and this undermined their religious authority. When the *dede* themselves migrated to cities, their communities became orphans and religious understanding declined.

Nevertheless, in some cases, village-like conditions were partly revived for some time by the migrants in the cities. Some evidence indicates that *cem* were held in the cities for some of the villagers on the occasion of the visit of a *dede*: "In the neighbourhood Altıntabak [Sivas], we did *cem* in secret. I remember a *cem* in 1963, we were afraid" (Karpat 1976: 128). In the big cities, some *cem* were held on a new community basis, the neighbourhood:

> When I was small, they did *cem* [in a *gecekondu* neighbourhood] in Ankara. *Dede* were doing them. [...] We had three *dede* there, one from Şarkışla, two from Divriği [districts of Sivas]. They did *cem* inside the neighbourhood. That lasted two or three years, then they stopped. Everyone was becoming isolated, they stopped the *cem*. In the vicinity there were all kinds of people, Sunnis, Çerkes [...] It stopped in 1980, we were afraid. (Interview with Alevi from Sivas, September 16th 1999).

The arrangements found in order to perpetuate the religious system were often temporary, and many *dede* stopped coming to the cities (Karpat 1976: 129). The institutions supposed to guarantee the survival of the community (like *musahiplik*) declined progressively with their raison d'être. In urban environments, Alevis could not lean on traditional religious structures any more; they had no infrastructure in the city. Therefore, they were particularly affected by secularisation. The ruptures induced by migration were even more radical abroad (Naess 1988: 182).

In addition, migration and social differentiation provoked the weakening of village hierarchies and other traditional structures, as well as a shift in social values (Mardin 1978). The functions of the *dede* as the judge and carrier of religious knowledge were henceforth executed by teachers and judges, ultimately having a profound affect on the *dede*'s authority. Many (especially left-wing) youngsters and migrants even rejected this authority outright.

Although freedom of religion was guaranteed by the 1960 Constitution (art. 19), another factor that weakened the practice in urban environments was social pressure. With migration, Alevis came in closer contact with the surrounding society, and fear appears as a leitmotiv in the two previously cited testimonies. In Western Anatolian cities, there were assimilation trends, and even conversions. Alevi bourgeois and merchants from Senirkent, settled in Burdur, converted to Sunni Islam at the end of the 1940s (Öktem 2000). In the 1960s, Jean-Paul Roux also observed conversions of *Tahtacı* in southern Turkey as a way of acquiring upward social mobility (Roux 1964: 52-53). These topics, previously concealed by Alevis as well as by Sunnis, are now being discussed with regret and discomfort.

The weakening of religious practices due to social differentiation and migration occurred first in the cities, but also in the villages. Nevertheless, it is necessary to moderate this statement. First of all, practices weakened and disappeared gradually at different rhythms according to regions and social structures. Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi dates the massive stop of *cem* ceremonies back to the 1960s (Kehl-Bodrogi 1988: 70). In the same way, Peter Bumke underlines the depletion of ceremonies and religious practices since the 1960s in Tunceli, the loss of authority of religious leaders, and the gradual disappearance of *musahiplik*, notably because of the suspicious supervision by Turkish authorities (Bumke 1979: 542)[1]. Nevertheless, in other regions, practices were visibly abandoned later[2]. In some villages, the practice of *cem* was not interrupted until recently (Interview with Alevi from Karlı village, Sivas, 4th December, 2000).

A process of secularisation in the meaning of "progressive autonomization of social sectors that escape the domination of religious meanings and institutions" was thus set in motion (Berger and Luckman

[1] In 1992, he stated that Tunceli Alevis did not practice *muharrem* fasting any more, that *aşure* was prepared more and more rarely, that the taboo on the eating of hare was not always respected, and that the *cem* ceremony tended to disappear (Bumke 1992).

[2] David Shankland observed this process at the end of the 1980s (1993).

1967: 118). For the young generation, belief and its foundations remained an enigma, but it was often considered more as liberation than a loss (Väth 1993: 216). These developments seem to fit quite well into a "modernization" process such as developmentalists conceive it: migration, social differentiation, secularisation, cultural assimilation, weakening of community practices, etc. However, other indicators seem to point towards different trends.

Political Change

Along with the various developments mentioned above, after years of living with a one-party system, Turkey finally gained a multiparty system in 1946. Henceforth, every party had to convince the voters, and these gained the power to give their voice or not. Thus, the Kemalist "people" (*halk*) became a political clientele (Güneş-Ayata 1994), and religion gained new importance as an electoral argument.

Multiparti System : A New Political Logic

The Democrat Party (DP)[1], created in 1946, endangered the domination of The Republican People's Party (CHP)[2]. It defended liberalism, equality, participation, a direct electoral system, and "the power to the people, not to the State", against the latter, considered to be centralist and bureaucratic. DP saw rural development as the key to an economic take-off, and therefore promised to provide resources to the peasants. It rapidly gained the support of the rural population. The elections of 1950 and, even more, of 1954, became a defeat for CHP, and a great victory for DP.

Contrary to the widespread opinion that Alevis have "always" supported CHP, many testimonies indicate Alevi support for DP in the 1950s[3]. Massively rural at that time, and having greatly suffered from the oppression of the peasantry by CHP during The Second World War, Alevis were probably sensitive to agricultural matters (Schüler 1998: 264-265). The Alevi poet Ali İzzet Özkan interprets the victory of DP as liberation from tyranny:

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[1]Demokrat Partisi.

[2]Cumhurriyet Halk Partisi

[3]*Moreover*, the fact that the liberal and conservative Nation Party (MP, *Millet Partisi*), won five seats in Kırşehir constituency in 1954 was attributed to the influence of the Bektashi order in this region (Reed 1954: 281). But the popularity of Osman Bölükbaşı, the local party leader, has to be taken into account as well (Ahmad 1977: 371).

The king died, the idol broke down
we have had enough of ignorance
the palace of tyranny fell down
we got rid of slavery
Democracy Messiah appeared
the tyrant's voice was cut
the call "Allah is big"
came down from the sky today[1].

The transfer of the famous Alevi tribal leader Hüseyin Doğan — spiritual leader of Ağuiçen *ocağı*, and Malatya representative — from CHP to DP in 1951 is widely considered as an evidence of the Alevi support to DP. Although it can not be generalised into a model of "Alevi electoral behaviour", the vote in the Tunceli province also indicates a preference for the early DP: in 1950, DP won 58,7% of the voices in Tunceli against 41,3% for CHP. After that, CHP won steadily until 1965 (Schüler 1998: 262-263). In Sivas, most Alevis seem to have supported DP at the 1950 and 1954 elections as well (Coşkun 1995: 271-272). There were even some *dede* families among the founders of the local branch of DP (Interview with an ocakzâde from Sivas, November 20th 2000). Some Alevis also were elected representatives of DP in Sivas (Interview with a local journalist in Sivas, December 6th 2000). In the first years, religion was probably not a determining factor of the vote, which was much more influenced by the peasant factor and the liberation of a felt authoritarianism.

Religion as a Political Issue

This, however, changed quite rapidly. Alevis constituted an important electorate in many regions. Thus, at the 1966 senatorial elections, all parties, and CHP especially, wooed Alevi voters (Mardin 1982: 186). But the accession of Aleviness to the status of a political issue could also represent a risk: in the mixed regions, it proved difficult to combine pro-Sunni and pro-Alevi discourses in a convincing manner. DP seems to have tried by using Aleviness as an electoral argument in Sivas (Unbehaun 2001: 3-4), and formulating different electoral speeches in Sunni and Alevi villages. While its politicians promised to construct *İmam-Hatip* schools in the Sunni villages, they recommended to Alevi villages: "let Sunni children go to the *İmam-Hatip* schools, while you educate your own children in modern schools" (Bozkurt 2000).

[1] Kıral öldü put kırıldı/Halas olduk cehaletten/Zulmün sarayı yıkıldı/Kurtulduk biz ezaretten/Çıktı Mehdi Demokrasi/Zalimin kesildi sesi/Allahuekber nidası/Bugün indi semavattan/ (Başgöz 1979: 102, quoted by Çoşkun 1995: 231).

This double discourse being difficult to hold, right-wing parties rapidly adopted explicit Sunni discourses (Bozarslan 2002). It was at this moment that DP insisted on religious topics like reintroducing the call to prayer in Arabic, and opening mosques and *İmam-Hatip* high schools. It also began to woo brotherhoods, by calling the Nurcus to vote for DP, and by DP ministers expressing sympathy for the leaders of the Nurcu movement. Gradually, Sunni Islam was beginning to work as a system of clientelism. In fact, the multiparty system allowed increased freedom of expression and permitted open criticism of state secularism, as well as demands for a more central role of religion. Since the very beginning of the multiparty system, the popular demand for religious education had led CHP, under the pressure of the ballots just before the 1950 elections, to distance itself from the ban of Islam in public life, while introducing optional religious teaching in primary schools in 1949, opening a theology faculty in Ankara, and preparing the opening of *İmam-Hatip* schools in order to educate official imams (Mardin 1982: 182 ff.).

While establishing new political dynamics, the multiparty system quickly led to the political use of religion. This may explain the departure of many Alevi voters from DP during the 1957 elections. Therefore, Alevi support for DP was often temporary. A few years later, the same poet Ali İzzet Özkan declaimed:

> We thought that DP was a young girl
> It proved ugly, perfidious, widow
> It pretended to held its head high and have a pure face, we were mislead
> Its face has proven black, its head bald[1].

Political Liberalisation and the Beginning of an Identity Movement

In the course of the 1950s, DP became more authoritarian. The government pestered the opposition by different means and monopolised political institutions (Landau 1974: 4). On May 27th 1961, a military coup overthrew DP. Many members of the party were judged for corruption, unconstitutional activities or high treason, and its leaders were executed. This coup was widely considered a liberal attempt to restore secularism and Kemalism. The National Unity Council withdrew from power, after having adopted a new Constitution which reaffirmed secularist principles and put

[1] Demokrat Parti'yi taze kız sandık/Çırkın çıktı, kahpe çıktı, dul çıktı/Alnım açık, yüzüm ağ dedi kandık/Yüzü kara çıktı, Başı kel çıktı/ (Başgöz 1979: 134, quoted by Çoşkun 1995: 231).

secularisation measures taken by the early Republic under constitutional protection. The 1960 coup and the Constitution that followed in its wake were welcomed by a number of Alevis. Considered guilty of having supported Kemalism, Alevis had been partly held away from political life during the DP period. Sure of the support of the governing party, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DIB)[1] had even resumed some of the insulting Ottoman policies against Alevis (Bilici 1996: 288).

The will of the officers to bring about debates on topics considered until then as taboo, and to bring social reforms, brought about a new intellectual atmosphere (Mardin 1978: 233). This liberal Constitution recognised pluralism and the existence of social groups, and guaranteed the right to strike, as well as freedom of thought, expression, association and publication. Diverse social, political and/or religious forces could manifest themselves, encouraged by the development of the media. This liberal climate fostered political differentiation, itself encouraged by social differentiation and growing regional inequalities. The growing working class as well as the rural population gained combativeness through labour unions (Landau 1974, Vaner 1984: 82). In short, social and political boundaries became more pronounced, new social and associative movements appeared, and the parties diversified. The creation of Turkey Workers' Party (TİP)[2] in 1961 and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)[3] in 1969 —a continuation of the Republican Peasant National Party (CKMP)[4] founded in 1966 —put an end to the bipolarity dominating the 1950s.

The Setting of the Alevi Issue on the Political Agenda

Within this general framework, the "Alevi issue" appeared in public space for the first time. Alevis demanded that the principles of equality and brotherhood proclaimed by the Republic be applied to them as well, and their specificity admitted. For Sunnis, Aleviness became a matter of concern, not only because it was perceived as heresy, but also because it seemed to constitute a favourable ground for leftist ideas and for "separatism". Although the official doctrine did not admit any segregation of the Alevis, in practice, politicians formulated more and more frequent warnings regarding a possible Alevi subversion (Dumont 1991: 161).

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[1] *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*
[2] *Türkiye İşçi Partisi.*
[3] *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi.*
[4] *Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi.*

Paradoxically, official authorities themselves initiated this growing awareness. In 1963, on the order of Republic President Cemal Gürsel, Hayri Mumcuoğlu, State Secretary of the coalition government (AP-CHP) headed by İsmet İnönü, asked several Alevi dignitaries to express their opinions regarding the project of creating a *mezhepler*[1] *dairesi*, an office for "denominations" within DİB, so that "all Muslim communities be treated equally" (Özbey 1963: 6). The aim of this reform was to guarantee that all religious groups existing in Turkey would be represented within DİB. Immediately, the right-wing and religious press[2] became offensive and accused the project of "bringing *mum söndü*[3] ceremonies into the mosques" (Şener and İlknur 1995: 81). They denied the existence of Shiites in Turkey (Raif Ogan, *Yeni Istanbul*, 23rd March, 1963), and refused the idea that Aleviness was a *mezhep*:

> They have no religious books... All their beliefs are passed by word of mouth, and learned merely on rumours and traditions (Raif Ogan, *Yeni İstanbul*, 25th March, 1963).

> Accepting legendary beliefs that pass from father to son, as if it was a precise and methodical *mezhep* [...] amounts to considering these superstitions as true and to legitimise them ! [...] Besides, Aleviness is not a *mezhep*, but a *tarikat*, and *tarikats* are forbidden by law...(Raif Ogan, *Yeni İstanbul*, 27th March, 1963).

In response, approximately fifty Alevi students in Ankara prepared a declaration. But Kurdish and Turkish students would not agree to its title, with Kurdish Alevis rejecting the wording, "to the big Turkish nation" (*Büyük Türk Ulusuna*) and opting for "to all the people of Turkey" instead. In the end, only four Law students signed it:

> It is obvious that practising separatism with sectarian differences among ethnically Turkish and Muslim citizens, instead of working for the unity of this country, only undermines national interests. [...] This community always got together around Atatürk during the national liberation war, worked in the service of national unity and remains the loyal defender of Kemalist principles[4].

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[1]This word originally designates the four Islamic law schools. In Turkey, it often means "denominational group" and is used to designate Sunnis on the one side and Alevis on the other. For lack of a better term, it will be translated with "denomination".

[2]Daily newspapers like *Milliyet* and *Cumhuriyet* defended Alevis against the attacks in the religious newspapers *Zafer* and *Adalet* (Ankara-based AP newspaper). The most violent attacks came from the newspaper *Sebil-ür-Reşad*. As early as in 1950, this newspaper accused Alevis of being communists. A pamphlet of defence was published by a Kars MP as early as in 1951 (Erdoğan 1951).

[3]"The candle went out". This expression designates incestuous and adulterous orgies that many non-Alevis believe and accuse Alevis of committing during *cem* ceremonies after having extinguished all lights.

[4]Ali İlhan, Engin Dikmen, Mustafa Timisi, and Seyfi Oktay. Originating from a modest family, the latter was the first graduated student from his village in Malatya. He joined CHP in the 1960s; he was also a founding member and the first General Secretary of the Hacı Bektaş

This declaration was widely broadcast in the newspapers and supported by many editorialists. A second statement was prepared by Alevi students and published in *Türkiye* on April 22nd, 1963; it was followed by another declaration signed by 347 students in Istanbul and published in *Türkiye*, May 1st 1963 as a reaction to a play entitled "*Mum söndü*" at the City Theatre[1] (Şener and İlknur 1995: 82). Panels on secularism were also organised (Özbey 1963). Famous progressive academics participated and defended the Alevi cause. Because of the strong protests it gave rise to, the project to create an office for *mezhep* was finally abandoned. The same year, a series on Aleviness was published in the newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, but it was interrupted by the military administration of Istanbul (Şahin 2001: 53).

Debating Aleviness: Justifications through *Türklük* and Services to the Country

In these public debates, Aleviness was legitimised by two kinds of arguments: on the one side by its Turkishness (*Türklük*), and on the other side by the services (*hizmet*)[2] the Alevis were said to have performed for the nation through their devotion to Kemalism. I have not found a single exception to these arguments. No voice claimed the existence of Kurdish Alevis, even though the Kurdish nationalist movement developed and Kurdish-speaking Alevis like İzzettin Doğan or Seyfi Oktay actively participated in the debate on Aleviness. Moreover, arguments such as "there is room for Alevis in the Republic for there must be room for everyone" were nowhere to be found.

Besides, quite different definitions of Aleviness were expressed. It was unanimously considered as a religious phenomenon. However, its exact nature remained quite imprecise: some gave it the status of a religion (*din*), others of a *mezhep*, and others again of a brotherhood (*tarikat*). For Ali Rıza Ulusoy, Aleviness was neither a religion nor a brotherhood, but an Islamic vision, "*islami görüş*" (Özbey 1963: 43). The use of the term *mezhep* was quite imprecise as well. The idea that there were two *mezhep* (Sunni and Shiite) was often expressed and differences between the four Sunni schools of thought were blurred.

[1] Performance of the play was abandoned. When it was staged again in another theatre a few months later, the students attacked the theatre (Interview with a participant in this demonstration September 28th 2000).

[2] On the use of this word in Turkish political discourse, see Copeaux 1999.

The main argument put forward by defenders of Aleviness to legitimise its place in the Republic was its presumed Turkishness. Like Cemal Özbey, Ali Rıza Ulusoy thus spoke of "Alevi Turks" (*Alevi Türkler)* and considered them "defenders of the national tradition and character". For him, Hacı Bektaş was not the founder of a brotherhood, but first of all the defender of Turkishness (Özbey 1963: 44-46): "Insofar as they represent Turkey's pure and immaculate Turkishness, accusing them [of practising *mum söndü* ceremonies] is a denial of, and an attack on, Turkishness" (Özbey 1963: 15-16). In the same way, İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, a Sunni academic calling himself an "Action Turkist", *aksiyon Türkçüsü*, defended Alevism in following terms: "For the Tahtacı, the Kızılbaş, the Bektashis are nationalist Turks. [...] They love Ali as a Turk, and symbol of Turkishness"[1]. Newspapers defending the Alevis sanctified their Turkishness as well, leaning on the argument of blood-related brotherhood: "Alevis and Bektashis, whom they provoke while calling them "Kızılbaş", are people of this country, they are Turkish, and they are Muslim"[2].

The second argument legitimating the Alevis' place in the Republic was their defence of the country and the Kemalist principles. Their presumed role in the liberation war and their support of Atatürk were stressed again and again. This argument was opposed by some Sunni circles that accused Alevis of having supported the Kemalist occidentalist project merely as a means of defending their economic and social interests, thus denying them any merits as citizens (Laçiner 1984: 239). This stress on Turkish nationalism is interesting, since in the 1960s some middle-age Alevis in the villages were quite explicit about Aleviness as linked with Iran, saying that they would pray in a mosque if and when the Shah of Iran came to Turkey. This was a position which put them completely at odds with Turkish Nationalism, and it was not reflected in the public debates at all[3].

Moreover, the argument of Turkey's unity was very much stressed[4]. Defenders of Alevis stigmatised the behaviour of religious-minded people as schismatic and dangerous for the national unity: Cemal Özbey accused the right of breaking "our unity and integrity" (*milli birlik ve bütünlüğümüzü*) in order to provoke a war between *mezheps*. The press equally warned about the

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[1] *D. Malatya Gazetesi*, 21st July, 1965.
[2] F. Suad, *Ulus Gazetesi*, 24th April, 1963 quoted in Özbey, 1963: 12-13.
[3] Conversation with Michael Meeker, August 2004.
[4] Which recalls the emphasis on Turkishness and the stress on unity in the political discourse of the 1990s. See Massicard 2002.

threat of fragmentation: it accused those who did not want to recognise freedom of religion of attempting to create divisions, and in this way becoming the enemies of the whole people[1]: "At the very time when we need unity and national solidarity more than ever, the authors don't have the right to sow the seeds of discrimination among Muslims, among the people" (Özbey 1963:17). In addition, the religious-minded activists were called "fanatic opportunists" (*çıkarcı yobazlar*), enemies and exploiters of religion who practice systematic provocation (Fikret Otyam in Özbey 1963: 39). Principles of equality and freedom of faith were highlighted, and the Alevis were praised as their defenders.

A last series of arguments referred to more general values, sometimes even to human rights. Defenders of Alevis presented them as linked to unity, but also to morality, human values, progressiveness and solidarity. In this call to universal values, the religious-minded camp was denounced as the enemy of civilisation (Ali Rıza Ulusoy in Özbey 1963: 45).

The Alevist Mobilization

These debates and the general mobilisation led to the creation of Alevi associations in the big cities. The first one was The Hacıbektaş Tourism and Information Association (*Hacıbektaş Turizm ve Tanıtma Derneği*) in Ankara, founded by a member of the Ulusoy family, and active until 1970. The same year, The Cultural Association of Development and Assistance to Hacıbektaş (*Hacıbektaş Kültür, Kalkınma ve Yardım Derneği*) was created, also in Ankara, by another member of the Ulusoy family, Ali Celalettin. It soon consisted of seventeen branches all over Turkey. Peasants from surrounding Alevi villages participated, sometimes in large numbers, in the "Hacı Bektaş" evenings organised by these associations (Kaleli 2000: 17). This organisation also published the first Alevi magazine, *Karahöyük*, from July 1964 onwards, under the direction of another member of the Ulusoy family, Hüsrev Şir. In Istanbul, the first Hacı Bektaş Veli Cultural Association was created in 1963 by the lawyer Haydar Özdemir (who later became General Secretary of BP).

These associations were mainly involved in the organization of cultural evenings. For the first time, a public *cem* was organised by The Hacıbektaş Tourism and Information Association in Ankara in December 1963, in which

[1] F. E. Atay, *Dünya Gazetesi*, 23rd April, 1963.

the most famous *ozan* (Aşık Veysel, Feyzullah Çınar and Mahsuni Şerif) participated. This *cem* caused a scandal. The press referred to it as "Alevis doing propaganda for the left". Actually, this manifestation was supported by the left-wing TİP. Even proceedings were started against this manifestation, but in the end no one was arrested. In 1964, Bektashi circles, especially those linked with The Hacıbektaş Veli Culture and Tourism Association (*Hacıbektaş Veli Kültür ve Turizm Derneği*) set up an annual festival in the Central Anatolian town of Hacıbektaş, the seat of the Hacıbektaş *tekke*. Because of the interdiction of the *tekke* and brotherhoods' activities since 1925, this festival, copied from the Mevlevi one in Konya (established as early as 1953), was presented as a pure cultural manifestation, aiming to develop local tourism and to show the Bektashi heritage in a favourable light (Norton 1992). Nevertheless, as early as the opening ceremony, a military General, invited for the needs of the protocol, expressed suspicions towards Alevis (Kaleli 2000: 19). As a matter of fact, it became obvious that the festival served as a rallying point for Alevis and Bektashis, and that some "folkloric" spectacles played a mobilizing role (Dumont 1991: 162).

Another aspect of this Alevi turmoil was the creation of newspapers and reviews. The most famous was the political and cultural semi-monthly called *Cem*, created in 1966, devoted to the defence of the Alevi cause. Directed by Abidin Özgünay, this review joined the ranks of Kemalist orthodoxy. The newspaper's cover was decorated, in turn, with pious images representing Ali, the twelve imams, or Hacı Bektaş, and with portraits of Mustafa Kemal. An important part of the magazine was devoted to the presentation of various aspects of Alevi culture. The first issues contain a series on the relations between Aleviness and Shamanism. The magazine was equally full of articles on the lives of Ali, Hacı Bektaş and other sacred figures. In the section, "letters to the Editor", theological issues were sometimes discussed. Most of the time, however, the readers wrote to complain about insulting remarks or bad treatment inflicted on Alevis, especially by imams. The main part of the magazine was devoted to comments on current events and debates with various Sunni religious groups. In particular, the magazine contained many attacks against the Nurcu and Süleymancı brotherhoods, which it accused of infiltrating the religious apparatus and setting public opinion against Alevis. One of the themes frequently developed, especially by academics (including Sunnis), was that Alevis were full-fledged Turkish citizens, and that the existing juridical and constitutional equality should reflect this fact. *Cem* estimated that a strict application of secularist

principles, associated with religious freedom, could alone provide a secure environment for Alevis (Dumont 1991: 163-164).

Other Alevi publications appeared: the magazine *Karahöyük* in Hacıbektaş, published by Bektashis and some members of the Ulusoy family[1], was released with its first issue on July 1st 1964; the weekly *Ehlibeyt Yolu* (The way of the Ehlibeyt) —launched as an independent political newspaper defending Republicanism, freedom of thought, consciousness and equality —was published from 1966 onwards, and replaced by the semi-monthly *Ehlibeyt Yönü* (The side of the Ehlibeyt), which was released at the end of 1968 and published until the coup of March 12th, 1971 (Yücel 1998: 61). It was introduced as an independent political newspaper, defending secularism and freedom of consciousness and thought, and showed a less Turkish nationalist tendency than the other newspapers (Interview with Hasan Gülşan, Istanbul, 16th September 2001). In addition to these there are the semi-monthly *Halka Rehber* (Guide to the People),[2] which ran from 1969 onwards and the semi-monthly *Gerçekler* (Realities),[3] which ran from the mid-1970s onwards. All of these newspapers were published in Istanbul, with the exception of *Ehlibeyt Yolu,* which appears to have had a connection to Ankara. Even if their circulation was not very important, the movement was significant[4].

The public debate on Aleviness spearheaded by these publications was reinforced by several events: In 1966, İbrahim Elmalı, the director of DİB, declared that Aleviness had disappeared, and the reaction of the Alevi public and media were so strong that he was forced to resign (Dumont 1991: 164-165). Sunni dignitaries replied with thinly veiled threats against Alevis (Kaleli 1990: 188). Some weeks later, in a memorandum on the "fight against harmful currents", the Chief of General Staff presented Alevis as instruments manipulated by international Communism. Again, the magazine *Cem* criticised him in virulent tones (Dumont 1991: 165).

[1]More precisely, the "Tourism" association which organised the Hacıbektaş festival.

[2]Launched as an "independent political newspaper defending secularism and freedom of consciousness, for God and the people".

[3]Launced as a "Current, literary, religious newspaper".

[4]Since I could not find the complete collections of these newspapers, it remains difficult to know until when they were published, if they followed one another – as their approximate publication periods seem to indicate – or if they were published simultaneously.

Who were the carriers of this movement? First of all, the influence of the Ulusoy family[1], but also of Bektashi circles, was significant, especially in the creation of the Hacıbektaş festival. This rapprochement between Alevis and Bektashis was the fruit of convergent interests: some Alevi migrants used the association with Bektashism, which was less taboo than Aleviness at the time, to integrate in a new urban environment (Karpat 1976: 128) and to facilitate contacts with an established urban elite (Interview with Seyfi Oktay, Ankara, 17th September, 2001). This rapprochement probably permitted some Bektashis to find popular and massive grassroots. Aside from this, two groups seem to have been particularly active in BP: on the one hand, there was an elite, urbanised decades earlier[2], in which the big families played an important role —these were the ones responsible for publishing the newspapers and reviews; on the other hand, there were the first Alevi students —the second generation of migration, and the first ones to benefit from access to the superior educational system. Like Kurdish and Islamic movements, Alevist mobilisation was generated by the double processes of urbanisation and mass education. It appeared in the cities, where students, intellectuals, and later, migrant workers experienced their "otherness" in relation to the surrounding population, as well as occasional incidents of discrimination.

Who did these public debates and initiatives around Aleviness reach? Associations probably gathered only a small minority of Alevis. However, in some villages, there were also attempts to codify a written Aleviness, leaning on principles of beliefs and practices. These attempts were carried out by individuals in their 40s and 50s, who were not necessarily *ocakzade*. This shows that the villages were neither intellectually isolated, nor passive[3].

[1]According to Mustafa Timisi, the members of the Ulusoy family did not launch the mobilisation. At the beginning, they had to stay in the background because of the watch on them by the authorities. When the movement developed, different members could then become more active. Interview with Mustafa Timisi, Ankara, 6th December, 2000.

[2]Among the founding members of *Hacı Bektaş Kültür, Kalkınma ve Yardım Derneği*, there was a hotel manager, two businessmen, a journalist and printer, but only one farmer (Kaleli 2000: 19).

[3]Conversation with Michael Meeker, August 2004.

The Unity Party (BP/TBP)

The Creation of a "Denominational" Party?

In this climate of turmoil, several Alevis were attacked by Sunnis in Ortaca (near Muğla) in July 1966, under the pretext that they had burned the mosque and destroyed the minaret[1]. After this event, different initiatives aiming to politically organise Alevis appeared. The creation of the Unity Party (BP/TBP) coincided with the launching of the magazine *Cem*, which supported the idea that Alevis should gain influence through their own party and further covered the formation of the party. The publisher and owner of the magazine also had a direct link with the party, being the president of its Istanbul branch.

The party was created on October 17th, 1966 by people "*without political experience*" (Teziç 1976: 336), its President being a retired general[2], and its General Secretary being the lawyer Cemal Özbey. Among the founders[3], was also the *Post-nişin* of the time, the lawyer Feyzullah Ulusoy. He was a member of the party's board until withdrawing in 1967, accusing the other members of being unable to manage a political party[4]. The Ulusoy family supported this initiative: In 1967, Kâzım Ulusoy, then MP of the right-wing Nation Party, *Millet Partisi*, joined BP along with his colleague, the Adana MP Hüseyin Balan. Three members of the family were elected MPs of the party in the 1969 elections. The founders therefore represented what might be called an Alevi "elite".

Some observers explained the creation of this party with social and economical arguments: Alevi craftsmen and merchants from Anatolia could thereby oppose the development of big, overwhelmingly Sunni, employers (Ahmad and Turgay-Ahmad 1976: 318). Defining itself as Kemalist, secularist and progressive, refusing conflicts of class and confession, this party advocated

[1]For a more precise description of this event, see *Ehlibeyt Yolu*, 27th July 1966 and Kaleli 2000: 97ff.

[2]Hasan Tahsin Berkman, born in 1904, from Çorum, retired since 1958.

[3]The founding members were: Cemal Özbey, lawyer from Arguvan (Malatya province) was the General Secretary, and Hüseyin Günal (building contractor) and Tahsin Tosun Sevinç (trade-unionist) his assistants. Among the other were also Feyzullah Ulusoy, Salim Delikanlı and Hüseyin Eren (retired colonels), Mustafa Geygel (building contractor), Mehmet Güner and Mehmet Ali Egeli (economists), Hüseyin Erkanlı and Faruk Ergünsoy (lawyers), Mustafa Topal (doctor), Arif Kemal Eroğlu and İbrahim Zerze (workers), and Hüseyin Dedekargınoğlu (printer) (*Cumhuriyet*, 18th October 1966, Kaleli 2000: 33).

[4]*Cem* n°29, October 1993, pp. 27-28.

a planned economy controlled by the state, and it promised the redistribution of land (Teziç 1976: 335-336). Nevertheless, the explanation emphasizing the economic interests of Alevi merchants from Anatolia seems exaggerated, since the party's first initiators were located in Ankara and Istanbul, even though they were soon followed by people in Anatolia. An alternate explanation attributes the founding of the party to the marginalization of Alevis in CHP during the 1960s, and notably, in the 1965 elections (Interviews with Mustafa Timisi, Ankara, 6th December, 2000 and with Seyfi Oktay, Ankara, 17th September, 2001).

For Feroz Ahmad and Bedia Turgay-Ahmad, BP represented the defence of Secularism against the religious camp (Ahmad and Turgay-Ahmad 1976: 318). Secularism and religion were in the centre of the social and political debate of the 1960s. Moreover, the use of "denominational" arguments by parties had changed the public place of religion. The creation of an Alevi party was also a reaction against what was considered the "exploitation of religion for political ends". TİP would have been one of the first parties to openly use "denominational" arguments:

> TİP has now discovered this fertile issue. They have been trying to make political capital out of the Sunni / Alevi division by fostering a political connection between the free-thinking urban supporters of their party and the traditional mystic Alevi communities. [...] It is no doubt in order to forge more effective links with the Alevi community that the annual convention of this party in the winter of 1966 was held in the province of Malatya (Yalman 1969: 59-60).

Feyzullah Ulusoy explains retrospectively that, for the 1969 elections, TİP advertised in Alevi villages by presenting itself as an Alevi party and by putting forward the fact that Mehmet Ali Aybar, the leader of the party, was *ocakzâde*. That is why he became MP in the Yozgat province: "We were accused of being *Kızılbaş*, let's try to avoid being accused of being Communists. I thought that if the Alevis saw my name, they would understand which the true Alevi party was"[1].

Nevertheless, it would be an exaggeration to interpret the creation of BP as a reaction to political Islam. Of course, AP had been in power since 1965, and Islam remained, with anti-Communism, a major instrument in the hands of the right against the growing strength of the left. Moreover, taking advantage of the permissive attitude of the AP government, religious-minded

[1] *Cem* 29. October 1993, p. 27.

associations as well as Koranic schools were on the increase. Nevertheless, Alevis politically organised themselves before the Sunnis, and the creation of BP may well have encouraged initiatives aimed at organizing Sunni Islam politically. In 1969 in Sivas, after BP had entered the lists, the mufti of Sivas was placed on the AP list, thus allowing it to present itself as a representative of Sunnis. As in 1965, AP and CHP each obtained four seats, but the explicit use of the "denominational" variable had changed the game. At the national level, new parties created at the end of the 1960s questioned AP's control of the right and used religion freely as a political argument: Firstly, the nationalist MHP, founded in 1969 by the colonel Alpaslan Türkeş, had success in religiously mixed areas. Secondly, the Islamic-minded Party of National Order, MNP, *Millî Nizâm Partisi*, was created just before the 1969 elections under the sponsorship of AP. Very soon, however, refusing to play the role that AP had foreseen, it became a political formation on its own in 1970. Refusing to appear as a "denominational" party, it stressed that "99% of the people is Muslim" (Laçiner 1984: 243). It was closed down in 1971 after the coup, and reorganised in 1972 under the name of The National Salvation Party, MSP, *Milli Selamet Partisi*.

The Turn to the Left

As early as its creation, BP seemed torn by the question of whether it should be an open "denominational" party (i.e., assume its "denominational" dimension), or a progressive, Kemalist party instead, which over the course of the 1970s gradually meant a leftist party. This tension became apparent through the competition between the two main wings: the "religious" one, led by Cemal Özbey and Hüseyin Bazlan, and the more "political" one, led by Mustafa Timisi. Timisi, who was about thirty years old at that time, and lived in an Ankara *gecekondu*, explained to me that that the rival wing, profiting from his absence, had created the party under a religious banner and taken for its emblem a lion surrounded by twelve stars, a symbolic representation of Ali and the Twelve Imams :

> Unfortunately, another group – of Alevi origin, completely of Alevi origin – while in my own initiative, there were also friends from Sunni origin. And there, Alevi motives had not been put forward. Another group therefore, under the leadership of Cemal Özbey [...], had taken an initiative. In order not to underestimate their work and not to put them in the shade, we had integrated them in our work group, a little bit with the idea of not letting them do stupid things, to keep them under control [he laughs]. But

> unfortunately, before the creation, before our work was institutionalised, before we could arrive to a certain point, with their friends they founded TBP separately. I, at that very moment, I was not there, I was not in Ankara. That's how the BP was founded [...] A group, despite us, a group within us, taking the initiative, put these twelve stars with the lion in the middle [...] I was not informed about it. [...] Of course, with such a beginning, it appeared as Alevis' own movement (Interview with Mustafa Timisi, Ankara, 6th December, 2000).

As early as March 18th, 1967, Hüseyin Balan was elected General Secretary. Even if, in their public declarations, the founders adamantly refused to be labeled Alevi, certain formulations of the manifesto showed the importance given to the religious issue, and, *a fortiori,* an Alevi orientation —even without mentioning confession explicitly. The party advocated:

> [...] the protection of freedom of consciousness, of faith and opinion for all; tolerance of all sorts of religious worship and ceremony provided they do not threaten public order and are not conflicting with the general moral representations nor to the laws that protect them; no one shall be obliged to participate in worship or religious services, or to reveal its religious convictions; and no one shall be condemned for his beliefs and religious representations (The political program of BP, *Birlik Partisi Programı*, art. 9).

Because of the need "to ensure equality of rights and religious equality, as well as to avoid coercion", religious education had to inculcate the students with secularist principles such as Revolutionarism, Reformism, progressiveness, unity, solidarity and tolerance. In this view, religious education, like worship itself, should not be monopolised by a single religion or a given faith (*Birlik Partisi Programı*, art. 15, Ahmad and Turgay-Ahmad 1976: 336).

In 1969, in its first elections, BP gained 2,8% of the valid votes and eight MPs, of which three came from the Ulusoy family[1]. This result was not very spectacular[2], but superior to that of other new, small formations present on the political scene at that time — for example, the MHP. The BP showed much regionally differentiated results (Schüler 1998: 267-269). It achieved most success in central and eastern Anatolia, and notably in religiously

[1]The MPs were Hüseyin Balan (Ankara), Haydar Özdemir (Istanbul), Kazım Ulusoy (Çorum), Ali Naki Ulusoy (Amasya), Yusuf Ulusoy (Tokat), Sami İlhan (Malatya), Mustafa Timisi and Hüseyin Çınar (Sivas).

[2]It is important to point out that the party did not present candidates in many provinces, including provinces with a considerable Alevi population, like Giresun or Gümüşhane (Karpat 1975: 116).

"mixed" regions, with a record of 16,7% in the Sivas province (Özbudun 1976: 110), probably because of the popularity of Mustafa Timisi in his region of origin.

In 1969, during its second congress, BP was renamed The Unity Party of Turkey, TBP, *Türkiye Birlik Partisi,* in order to put an end to the rumours which accused it of working for a division of Turkey, or on behalf of Iranian interests (Yücel 1998: 66). Beside this, internal tensions became more virulent. After controversial debates, the Sivas representative Mustafa Timisi was finally elected as the General Secretary (Interview with Abidin Özgünay, Istanbul, 25th October, 2000). He wanted to transform TBP into a "more radical and more dynamic" party (Turkish press of 24th and 25th November 1969, quoted by Ahmad and Turgay-Ahmad 1976: 379). The third congress in 1970 was again characterised by the tension between the two wings, but Mustafa Timisi was still re-elected.

While there was no clear majority in the Parliament, TBP, even with few representatives, gained a strategic position. In 1970, five of its representatives[1] decided to support the conservative liberal government of Süleyman Demirel, leader of AP. The strong reaction of the grassroots led to the exclusion of these representatives from the party[2], and finally to its shift to the left. Later publications of TBP (like TBP 1978: 17 f) indicate that it wanted to erase its widespread Alevi image. For Mustafa Timisi,

> [I]t is true that those voting for the BP are especially Alevis. But it is not a consequence of the denominational factor. It is a result of the sincere Kemalist secularist vision which is at the foundation of the party (Teziç 1976: 336).

Henceforth, the party presented itself as a revolutionary, anti-fascist party of the working class, and positioned itself on the left of CHP, in competition with TİP, which was closed down during the 1971 coup (Schüler 1998: 266).

In 1973, the electoral manifesto clearly indicated this shift to the left with slogans such as, "Long live a freer, more independent and more democratic Turkey !"; or by materialist issues like the liberation of peasants, workers and the "exploited". Being anti-imperialist, the party advocated the end

[1] Kazım Ulusoy, Ali Naki Ulusoy, Yusuf Ulusoy, Hüseyin Balan, and Hüseyin Çınar.
[2] See the book published by the party on this issue: Birlik Partisi n.d.

of the relations with NATO and the Common Market. It resumed the six principles of CHP, with some interpretative differences, and added some leftist principles as well[1].

Even after this leftist shift TBP did not really abandon claims relating to religious matters. On the contrary, it attempted to reconcile religious beliefs and socialist principles:

> For TBP, Socialism is not a rigid and one-dimensional thought. It accepts the laws of scientific Socialism and other social researches, religious and humanists principles, customs and traditions. That is why TBP respects religious beliefs and materialist philosophies in the same manner. It considers differences coming from political ideas and religious beliefs as an individual problem and wants the state to equally respect these differences. [...] All big religions (for example the Muslim religion) accept the necessity of social transformations. Socialism and religion unite in love of the people. A dispute between Socialism based on ethical principles, and religious beliefs is therefore impossible, provided that religion does not become a means to provoke differences, to oppress, or to exploit the laborious masses. [...] There is no contradiction between religion and Socialism. A believer can be a socialist too. But religion is a matter of the communities, that is why the Directorate of Religious Affairs does not have any place in a secularist Republic (Türkiye Birlik Partisi 1973: 31).

Probably, a Kemalist and leftist centre coexisted with many more religious-minded members within the party[2]. Moreover, TBP used religious arguments especially to criticise its opponents: "The party considers the multiplication of anachronistic educational establishments, practised in spite of the secularist principle and the spirit of Kemalism to educate enlightened men of religion, as dangerous for the future of the people". It criticised the religious politics of the right-wing parties by accusing them of "exploiting outdated, scholastic and fanatical ideas" (Türkiye Birlik Partisi 1973: 51).

This slide to the left permitted TBP to take advantage of the absence of any other socialist party in the 1973 elections. It allied with a group of socialists, and the former TİP leader, Mehmet Ali Aybar, was on the top of TBP's list in Istanbul. But the party had already lost a part of its credibility. In 1973, it obtained only 1,1% of the votes, and one single representative, Mustafa Timisi. He has retrospectively explained TBP's decline by the fact

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[1]The principles added by the TBP were: socialism (*toplumculuk*), democracy, independence, libertarism (*özgürlükcülük*), equality and patriotism. Türkiye Birlik Partisi 1973: 12-30.

[2]Interview with a former member of the TBP's assembly, Ankara, 23th November, 2000.

that the idea of an Alevi party was not accepted, and that CHP, headed by Bülent Ecevit, who had succeeded İnönü, appropriated the claims and aims of TBP, but with much more credibility (Timisi 1988: 15). As a matter of fact, at the beginning of the 1970s, CHP adopted a "left of the centre" position : it added socialist values to Kemalist principles and put the problems of migrants and urban workers to the fore. CHP then achieved great success, notably in Central and Eastern Anatolia (with an increase of 7,7% in comparison with 1969), which was sometimes interpreted as the return of the 1969 TBP-voters to CHP (Özbudun 1976: 215). In the 1970s, CHP became the most important party in the urban centres. At the 1975 senatorial by-elections, TBP again lost votes, and disappeared completely from Parliament after the 1977 elections, where it obtained only 0,4% of the votes. Before that election, the General Secretary and several members of the General Assembly resigned from TBP to join CHP, considering that a union with CHP was the only solution at that time[1].

Therefore, TBP did not succeed in gathering Alevi votes. As TBP was "an organisation cutting vertically through social classes, [it was a] representative of the ideology of a denominational community" (Sencer 1971: 343), and the Alevis were doubtless too socially and economically differentiated to gather in a party whose program had for single originality an Alevi symbolic. In addition to internal discord, this failure also had external reasons like the competition of more credible parties in the same niche. The fiasco of TBP indicates that there was no room, in the 1970s, for a party devoted - even implicitly - to the defence of a "denominational" minority. With the growing correspondence between Sunni Islam and right-wing Nationalism, young Alevis moved gradually towards the secular left and sometimes actively turned against the *dede* and religious practices. Aleviness could not attain the place occupied by orthodox Islam in political discourse, and the Alevis did not succeed in transforming their religious system into a mobilising political ideology (Bayart 1982: 114).

Conclusion

In the 1960s, in the course of urban migration, Alevis experimented with a radical process of social and religious change characterized by the

[1]Interview with a former member of the TBP's assembly, Ankara, 23th November, 2000.

breaking down of former communities and the loss of religious practice. They sociologically "integrated the broader country" and partly lost their specificity.

However, the same years also witnessed the first Alevi public mobilization of the Republican era, which had both cultural and political dimensions. Religion became a political issue, and the "denominational" variable became a determinant element of political space. At the same time, however, the worker and student movements of the 1960s indicated growing horizontal mobilisation. In these conditions, can we speak about the formation of an Alevi political space ? Many analysts assert that Alevis were by and large in favour of CHP's opinions which, in the 1960s, progressively turned from Kemalism to Socialism. Moreover, it is generally admitted that a good part of the voices that permitted TİP to obtain fifteen seats at the 1965 elections came from Alevis. In the 1969 elections, in Tunceli, TİP obtained much better results (16,8% of the votes) than TBP (6,9%). TBP was influential in the same region as TİP, which some observers explain by the numerical importance of Alevis (Özbudun 1976: 110). Thus, the 1960s show the emergence of an Alevi political space, but one that was not monopolised by a single political party.

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THE ALEVİS IN GERMANY AFTER SEPTEMBER 11th - CAUGHT BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE?

Beatrice Hendrich

Introduction

The September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, are said to have influenced various aspects of the political, public and private spheres. In political terms, we can clearly observe that the world has changed since those events, regardless of whether we consider the attacks to have legitimized the wars that followed, or to have functioned as mere pretexts for prearranged military aggression. But on a level beneath the national, on the level of social groups, can we detect any effects of this incident?

The extent of the terror acts, and the unprecedented aggression with which they were presented in the mass media, forced everybody to side with either the United States *or* the terrorists, rendering more balanced positions impossible, and even unethical. The pro-US discourse immediately defined its own devotees as representatives of the civilized world, of humanity and peace, and ultimately of the "Good" itself.

The claim to be representative of *good* attitudes and behaviour, of highly civilized values and manners, of enlightenment and modernity, is not unfamiliar to members of the Alevi community, at least in terms of its spokepersons' self-representations to the non-Alevi public. Consequently, the Alevi community could easily have leaned towards situating itself at the pro-US side in the discourse that followed the attacks. The situating process, however, turned out to be far more complex and multifaceted than might have been suspected. To begin with, the Alevi majority's leftist orientation and fundamental concern for the oppressed - that is, the broader part of the Middle East held in neo-colonial dependence on "the West" -inclined them to seek out political reasons for the attacks, instead of unreservedly embracing the position of the United States. Moreover, the behavior of the non-Alevi majority society in migrant countries like Germany made it difficult for Alevis to side with "the West". German politicians as well as "the people on the street" displayed hysterical xenophobic patterns in the days after the attacks, assailing migrants/Germans for their alleged complicity with Islamist

terrorists. Thus the Alevis in Germany were likely to have felt caught between a rock and a hard place at that time: on the one hand, they were confronted with an event that could not be easily adapted to their antecedent worldview and historical consciousness, and on the other, they were not allowed to situate themselves in the landscape of civilized modern values where they would like to have been.

In an identity crisis such as this, the community leaders should have been able to reaffirm their members' self-confidence, and show a way out of the crisis, by making sense of the distressing experience. But in the case of the Alevi community in Germany, we can detect a difference, if not a contradiction, between the public discourse held by Alevi spokespersons (Goffman's professionals), and the perception and embedding of the events into antecedent schemes by Alevi lay people. This article attempts an analysis of these issues by inquiring as to the effects of the September 11th attacks on the historical consciousness of Alevis in Germany, and the differences in strategy between their spokes- and laypersons regarding the embedding of the attacks into the particular Alevi historical consciousness.

Our treatment of this subject is based on Jürgen Straub's and Jörn Rüsen's notion of historical consciousness and, empirically speaking on qualitative, problem-centered interviews with Alevis residing in Germany, conducted between Summer 2000 and Winter 2002/03.

(Alevi) Historical Consciousness

> Historical contingency and crises have to become embedded in a structure of cultural orientation in order to maintain historical and biographical continuity, and to make comprehensible what otherwise would remain senseless. This structure is the cultural achievement called 'historical consciousness'. But not every crisis is 'embeddable' in the antecedent historical consciousness. Some crises, the 'critical' ones, evoke the adjustment of the historical consciousness, some, that is to say the 'catastrophic' ones (trauma), almost 'destroy[s] the possibility of historical consciousness' (Rüsen 2001: 153).

Theoretically speaking, historical consciousness is a mental answer to the challenge of contingency (Rüsen 2001: 150). It enables individuals as well as social groups to turn the unexpected into a part of the historical continuity and to give meaning to the incomprehensible. It helps the individual to situate himself or herself in space and time, to find a particular place in the complex

structure of the experiences of the past and the expectations of the future. While doing so, the individual also aims to build up his or her identity by defining the borderlines between their own world and "the other" (Rüsen 1999: 13 ff). Likewise, the process of situating helps the individual first to clarify and then to construct dependencies, similarities and congruencies with other points in the structure, be they individuals, collectives such as institutions, or abstract notions like ideas and ideologies. There is no historical consciousness as such; it always develops out of a process of individual and collective construction while "individuals and groups are to varying degrees exposed to socio-cultural incentives and disincentives that promote or impede the historical sense" (Kölbl and Straub 2001: paragraph 118). Its content is, roughly speaking, bound to the cultural frame (including individual and collective experience), and its form is shaped by the particular society. Thus, there does not exist an anthropological universal called "historical consciousness", at least not one universal form of it.[1]

In public discourse, the Alevi past is said to have been marked by persecution and massacres, carried out as a rule by the (Sunni) hegemony (the Ottoman State, the Rightists, the religious fanatics, *yobaz*). The never ending persecutions led to the societal marginalization of the Alevi community, which, in turn, developed a very specific culture, with norms and values distinct from those of the hostile surroundings. At one point in their history, the Alevis decided to withdraw both "mentally" and geographically from these surroundings by removing themselves to remote sites. Even after the founding of the Turkish Republic and the first years of work-migration, Alevis still had to hide their cultural and religious identity.

Concerning the historical consciousness of Alevis in Germany after September 11th, one might have expected that since their self-image as eternal victims is deeply rooted in their history, it would not have vanished so easily.[2] It has, in fact, been only over the last twenty years that the Alevis have gained a new self-confidence and dared to speak and act publicly as Alevis. But this new self-image is still weak and can be undermined by minor events. Thus it might have been expected that their current historical consciousness— a combination of the "traditional" identity, shaped by a

[1] Straub uses "historical consciousness" in a very specific manner. To him, it is "a result of the development of occidental cultures and societies" (Kölbl and Straub 2001, Abstract). This understanding is too strict while talking about Alevi migrants and their culture, for to classify them as occidental or oriental produces no result.

[2] Concerning the "longue durée" of some Alevi features see Dressler 2002 (aptness to riot) and Ersoy 1998 (traumatization).

history of persecution and suffering, and the newly developing one as members of the modern world - would have led them to conceive the attacks as proof of their historical knowledge in something of the following manner: "Once again we Alevis have become the victims of our well-known enemy, the yobaz, but this time in our capacity as representatives of the developed world. And because of our historical knowledge, we know even more about the enemy and his devastating potential for aggression than do many others in the West."

But in the period following the attacks, Alevis in Germany would have come to realize that the majority society would accept neither their current self-image, nor their eagerness and preparedness to defend Germany from all kinds of fundamentalisms. This would have probably prompted the Alevis to take refuge in their traditional identity as the eternal marginalized and persecuted minority.

Rüsen differentiates three types of crisis (related to the historical consciousness): normal, critical and catastrophic. The "normal" crisis becomes integrated in the antecedent structure of historical consciousness and interpreted by its schemes without any change in structure or schema. The "critical" one requires a greater effort on the part of the affected individuals in order to become integrated, since new elements must be inserted into the schema of interpretation. The "catastrophic" one, the trauma, more or less "destroys the possibility of historical consciousness" (Rüsen 2001: 153).

According to my assumptions, the Alevi perceptions of the attacks would turn out as a special kind of "critical crisis" in the sense that the current historical consciousness had to be changed, not by the addition of new elements, but by reverting to the former approved consciousness. The limits between their own world and "the other" would change: the broader modern world, which had included the Alevi community, would cease to exist. There would remain two distinct worlds: the world of oppressed Alevis and the world of aggressive non-Alevis.

In the context of Alevi historical consciousness, "Alevi identity" has to be taken into account for two reasons: The first is that the quest for and development of one's own unique "identity" seems to be part of the above mentioned challenge of modernity; the second is that identity and historical consciousness are interdependent factors, as will be discussed below.

(Alevi) Identity

When talking about identity and historical consciousness, the question concerning the relationship between both concepts arises. This relationship should be thought of as interdependent rather than hierarchical. Historical consciousness forms individual and collective identity:

> The dynamic of the formation of identity consists of [a] mental process[,] during which an event becomes historical and in which the experience of the past is transformed into a sensible and meaningful history through interpretation and representation (Rüsen 2001: 159).

The continuous process of constructing, revising and reconstructing personal identity includes the questioning and adaptation of historical consciousness; while doing this, the individual not only "explores" the past but also takes the future into consideration (Straub 1999: 85). Furthermore, identity as a multidimensional entity incorporates not only a factual aspect (what I am), and a potential aspect (what I might be), but also an ideal (what I want to be). This ideal has its seeds in a given socio-cultural context, and its individual specification occurs within the framework of this context (Straub 1999: 82). The development of identity as well as of historical consciousness is based in the individual, but the pre-existing frames - we may even say boundaries - are, as Halbwachs has taught us, defined by the collective (Halbwachs 1925).

And so, in turning back to the Alevis, we may first of all expect the Alevi community to have involved itself in a far-reaching identity discourse, because, since the 1960s, the concept of identity has gained a normative drive. At that time, sociologists considered the development of an identity to be a desirable undertaking; to fail in this endeavor means "to remain in immaturity", and to succeed means to attain autonomy (Joas 1994: 112). Secondly, we may expect the identity of an individual Alevi to match the identity that is "publicly" displayed (I hesitate to call this "collective identity" for reasons explained below). And thirdly, we may expect the *ideal* aspect of this Alevi identity to correspond to the historical consciousness of being the oppressed (past to present) and striving for a modern autonomy (present to future).

If we run through current book titles, or the pages of Alevi journals, we might get the impression that "the suffering of Alevis through history" and "Alevi identity" are the main topics occupying Alevi minds. We may even

believe that there exists no difference between the collective and the personal memory, and that every Alevi individual understands his or her existence exclusively as a part of this common history. Moreover, it may appear as if an Alevi identity already exists—in an essentialist sense—and that this identity is merely in need of further strengthening and clarification: an identity that requires public articulation and acceptance by the "other" in order for Alevi history to reach its turning point as a type of compensation for all the sufferings and inflictions of the past.

An example of a book title that typifies many others is Kaleli's book "Kimliğini haykıran Alevilik" (Kaleli 1990). The journal "Alevilerin Sesi", which is published in Germany, presents several remarks on Alevi identity in each issue. The following examples of readers' comments demonstrate a high degree of internalization of the importance of "getting an identity":

> I want to know what it means to be an Alevi, because I don't want just to say 'I'm Alevi'. I want to know the reason, and not only be happy for carrying this name. And I want to add that I am proud of being an Alevi. Who ever buys this journal, is really lucky, because there are so many things in it, and one learns so many a new things. So I advise you, become a subscriber of Alevilerin Sesi. And soon, you will know, who you are. (Pupil at the age of 14 in *Alevilerin Sesi* 2002, 51/1: 31).

Another reader restricts his Alevi identity to a famous motto:

> The religious identity of the Alevis is concentrated in the term 'eline, diline, beline sahip ol' ('Control yourself!'): that means, control your hands (the demand not to grap at something you do not possess), your tongue (avoidance of lie and defamation), and your loins (the command to constrict sexual intercourse to the monogamous marriage). (Pupil at the age of 14 in *Alevilerin Sesi* 2002, 52/2: 29).

Although the journal raises the question of Alevi identity again and again, the picture of a "real Alevi" remains somehow one-dimensional. The fact that each identity in our postmodern society is shifting, multifaceted, and subject to a persistent process of negotiation remains unaccounted for.

Elise Massicard's article, *Alevismus in der Türkei: Kollektive Identität ohne starken Inhalt?* (2001), centers on the emergence of the identity discourse in Turkey over the last twenty years. In Massicard's opinion, the Alevi identity discourse ran parallel with, and was influenced by, other newly developing discourses in Turkey, such as the ethnic (Kurdish) discourse and

the political (leftist) discourse. Following the author's analysis, the Alevi identity discourse has been determined by ethnic perspectives and external boundaries; *Alevilik* is therefore an instrument for the manipulation of different pressure groups in Turkey: "The process of constructing identity is not within the power of the confident and autonomous subject, but is subjected to the influence of the socio-political context and discoursive constellations" (Massicard 2001: 173). One reason why Massicard opts for this position may be the fact that the material she analyzed (several Turkish newspapers) represents the opinions of the experts, that is, the public discourse of the Alevi leaders. But what does a public discourse reflect? The group's collective opinion? The collective identity and worldview? Who is identical with what?

Professionals and Lay People (in stigmatized collectives)

The Alevi community in Germany must possess a resistant and dynamic core identity, otherwise it would not have survived the political pressure and societal disavowals experienced through the twentieth century. During migration from the villages to the metropolises, and from Anatolia to Europe, they have been the majority society's "underdog", forced to hide their religion, or even their own language[1]. Thus, there must exist something stronger than all these influences, but is this "something" the collective identity, worldview and historical consciousness presented by the Alevi professionals and spokespersons?

In my opinion, it is not. The public discourse can not be, and is actually not meant to be, identical with the group members' worldview. According to Liebsch, "Nobody who says 'We' and claims [to be the true representative of] that 'We', is identical with it" (Liebsch 1999: 97). While a spokesperson is trying to homogenize the public image of the represented group, he or she at the same time ignores or even oppresses the divergent opinions inside the group, and denies the "inner strangeness". "A 'We' only exists in plural. The predicated 'We' is always challenged by the singularity of the predicating subject" (Liebsch 1999: 96). The spokesperson constructs an "abstract affiliation", a collective identity, and has to be legitimized for doing so (Liebsch 1999: 98). The need for legitimization grows proportionate with

[1]That is the case with Kurdish speaking Alevis. As religion "survives" as performance, and performance depends on speech act, the loss of language results in the loss of the cultural memory and identity.

the growing heterogeneity and anonymity of the cultural horizon in the (post-) modern society.

Furthermore, even if we accept that a cultural and religious affiliation (as opposed to deliberate membership) possesses an "ontological" core, a group is still basically what its individuals imagine it to be. In other words, the individual imagination of the group becomes a part of the individuals' ego-identity (Reese-Schäfer 1999: 16). The imagining of a collective identity may serve social stabilization in times of increased mobility and social change due to processes of migration and globalization (Reese-Schäfer 1999: 18), as with the Alevi communities, which are today spread throughout the world.

A spokesperson of the Alevi community, be it an author, a scientist or an Alevi activist, faces an additional particularity: he or she is the representative of stigmatized individuals and a historically stigmatized community. To be an Alevi, of an Alevi origin, in Turkey was and still is a stigma, a tribal and phylogenetic stigma in Goffman's terms - an "inherited" social feature like "race", "nationality", or "religion". To be an Alevi in Germany, is a double stigma. To the German majority society, the (historic) religious stigma is indiscernible because it is an unknown cultural concept among the majority of Germans; instead Alevis are stigmatized for being a part of the Muslim migrant community. But in the average neighborhood, the migrant-ghetto, at work and at school, again, Alevis have to deal with Sunni Muslims who exported their stigmatizing behavior from Turkey to Europe. If we look at the "mother-tongue lessons", which were obligatory for children of "Turkish origin" in Germany until only a few years ago, we see a perfect example of this synergetic double stigmatization (Hendrich 2004). Firstly, the Alevi child "of Turkish origin" is forced by German law to take a class regardless of whether the child or the child's family are interested in that language. (The family may not be interested because they are ethnically of non-Turkish origin, or because they do not make use of Turkish any longer, etc.) Secondly, the child is exposed to anti-Alevi remarks from teachers who have been sent by the Turkish state to teach not only the Turkish language, but Kemalist history and Sunni Islam as well (Ehrkamp and Leitner: paragraph 40). In accordance with their stigma-management in Turkey, the first Alevi migrants in Europe preferred to conceal their religious (and ethnic) affiliation. During the last years, a new form of stigma-management has developed: that of exposure and publicity. Alevi life and Alevi culture are put on the public agenda, sustained and promoted by associations and

communities quite different from former Alevi social institutions.[1] This public discourse is in need of written expressions (journals) and eloquent representatives. In time, the representatives turn into "professionals". To manage the public discourse, and to gain sympathy and support outside the group, the representative has to master its social code.

> When representing their group to normals, they may embody in an exemplary way the ideals of the normal, being partly chosen for being able to do so. However, when attending social affairs among their own, they feel a special obligation to show that they have not forgotten about the ways of the group or their own place [...] (Goffman 1963: 134).

But even the most successful professional will not lose his intrinsic relation to his original in-group, he will not cease to be a stigmatized individual brought up in this particular group (Goffman 1963: 39). Still, something else about the professional is certainly true: he or she does not represent those group members who either do not care about their stigma or are too illiterate to follow the written and oral discourse (Goffman 1963: 39).

The decisive question of this article is - to repeat it - if and how Alevis in Germany incorporated the attacks of September 11th into their historical consciousness. The answers of the Alevi professionals are easy to summarize. For example, in press releases from the 18th of September, 2001 and from the 9th of September, 2002 the *Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu* condemned the attacks, referred to the Alevi community as a reliable ally in the fight against extremism, stressed the historical Alevi-Islamist-antagonism, and asked the German government not to neglect the threat that Muslim fundamentalists posed to Germany (Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu 2001a, 2001 b). Thus, the professionals' historical consciousness seems to be affirmed by the attacks. Still, it should have become evident from the above mentioned considerations that the answers this Alevi public discourse offered, represented only a particular segment of the whole. The question is whether or not we would find the same answers and perspectives when asking the "average", lay Alevi - the offspring of an Alevi family with no considerable connection to the modern Alevi associations, and no profound knowledge of Alevi history and religious rituals?

In the following, I will describe and discuss some answers from such lay people. Some of the interviewees have almost no contact with the

[1] For further details on these changes, see Sökefeld 2002.

organized Alevi community, some of them are members of the board of their local association (I will indicate this in the appropriate place), but none are active on the national level, either as Goffmanian professionals or employees paid by any Alevi association.

The Interviews

I conducted a total of 39 qualitative, problem-centered interviews[1] in 2000, and 35, with the same interviewees, in 2002. My dialogue partners were Alevis of different ages, all of them residing in the larger cities of western Germany, having lived there for a minimum of ten years. These interviews constitute a part of a broader project on Alevi identity and memory culture in Germany. In the first series, the questionnaire had focused on personal values and attitudes concerning Alevilik, Alevi history, and living in Germany as Alevi. In the aftermath of September 11th, I decided to reformulate the questionnaire to focus on questions relating to this event (and the time thereafter), in order to determine whether or not the attacks resulted in the alteration of Alevi opinions and values on one level, and Alevi historical consciousness and attitudes on another. Opinions and values are, roughly speaking, rather superficial things, and are likely to change as a result of relatively minor social, political and/or economic fluxuations. Historical consciousness and attitudes, on the other hand, only change in reaction to categorical shifts or extreme events.

At first glance, the statements made by the interviewees concerning the attacks give the impression that September 11th was of no consequence to the Alevis in Germany at all. Retirees, for instance, had spent their summers in Turkey, and thus had participated in a "communication community" that was totally different from the one in Germany. They had not experienced the nervous discussions and frantic actions of the German population, and therefore their answers concerning the attacks, etc. are not comparable to the statements of those Alevis who were in Germany at the time of the events. During the interviews, they showed little eagerness to discuss this subject at all, and so I had to shorten the questions and could eventually not take their answers into account in this article. Among the younger interviewees, two persons did not even remember the date "11th of September"; three others could not remember names like Bin Laden, Taliban, or even Afghanistan. The terms "Anthrax" and "Sleeper", while of high prominence in the public

[1] For the technical details concerning this form of qualitative interview, see Witzel 2000.

discussion during the weeks and months after September, appeared only twice in all of the interviews. If we try to summarize the answers, we obtain the following rough scheme:

1. No surprise!

a. Events like that were expected to happen sooner or later due to the aggressive / unjust / selfish politics of the US.

b. Acts of aggression are nothing new to mankind. Why should one attack more or less change my life?

2. If the attacks generated any type of change at all, they served only as a kind of catalyst: enforcing primary attitudes, making a person implement something she or he had thought about or had planned to do a long time ago.

3. Highly political interpretations.

a. Attacks were (mainly) evaluated as not being rooted in religious, Sunni, thoughts and attitudes, but caused by (wrong) political ideas.

The following interviews are only examples, but they represent the spectrum of answers.

Fadime, 31: Fadime grew up in a Kurdish village, spent a few years at a Turkish primary school, and was then "moved" to Germany. She is not a member of the local Alevi association, but because some of her relatives are involved in the local Alevi association's activities, she follows the ongoing discussions and events as an interested, rather critical outsider. Although she grew up in the village, she states that she learned that she was an Alevi at the age of 20, in Germany. She tells me that before coming to Germany, she had had the feeling of being inferior to the other Muslims (who, for example, did not touch the food she had prepared for the neighbors), but she did not know why she was "worse". To be Kurdish was a second reason for being inferior, but obviously a verbalizable one, contrary to being Alevi. At present, the center of her personal feeling of inferiority is visibly shifting from Sunni-Alevi antagonism to tensions between "foreigners" and Germans. Although she is economically and culturally "well integrated", and holding a German citizenship, she does not feel accepted by the German society. That is why, she states, she always refers to herself as a Turk, and not a Kurd, Alevi or German, even though her Turkish is poor and she is unable to read Turkish text. According to her, oppression of the Alevis is a historical fact, and a continuity in Alevi identity, but the Alevis' responsibility is their naiveté, which make them easily exploited for political ends again and again. Furthermore, they do not rally as the Sunnis do for their own ends. The only

place she feels at home and at ease is the village of her childhood. The only thing she believes in, and the only center of her identity, is herself. In the second interview, she affirms her compassion for the individual, innocent victims of September 11th, but also blames the US for its ongoing unjust superpower politics, which lead inescapably to acts of aggression. The attacks did not make her feel caught between the fundamentalists and the Germans, but moved her closer to the big community of migrants in Germany. She blames the German security measures after the attacks for strengthening antagonism and hatred between the majority society and the "others"; "incitement of the people" (Volksverhetzung), as she calls it. In Germany, she re-experiences the social structures of her childhood, only the names of the superior group have changed: from Turkish and Sunni to German and Christian. Only her children will be better off, she believes.

Taki, 25: Although Taki spent only his very first years in his Kurdish village, he calls Eastern Turkey his real "Heimat" (homeland), and himself a Turk of Kurdish origin. Still, in his statements, "nationality" figures more as a problem than a positive frame for identity. He prefers to denote himself Muslim, "not one of those who pray five times a day", and Alevi. For him, Alevilik means to hand down the Alevi history, basic rituals, and fundamental values from generation to generation. To be Alevi also means to exercise religion in a quietist manner, at home, individually, and not with loud prayers and spectacular ceremonies. Details of Alevi history and rituals are unknown to him and not of major importance. The attacks of September 11th left an enduring impression on him:

> The questions you asked me [my questions on his personal experiences and memories concerning September 11th] will still be asked after twenty years. Because you don't forget history. I guess these questions will appear again and again in my live [sic].

The experience of a movie-like scenario on TV becoming reality caused a vague feeling of anxiety and skepticism. When asked about his opinion concerning the security measures that followed, he characterizes his position as being "somewhere in between". On the one hand, as a rather conservative individual in terms of political orientation and personal attitudes, he supported the measures for the sake of "security and order" in Germany. On the other hand, he condemned the humiliating searches of mosques and private homes. In that case, as in several other matters, he sided with the Sunnis. The attacks frightened him, they made him think about life and sudden death (and as a result of these thoughts he decided to marry his girlfriend). But the distant

aggression of some Islamists did not evoke any kind of anti-Sunni feelings. Rather, the German reality in the aftermath of the attacks, characterized, amongst other things, by police actions against Muslim communities, strengthened his personal "Muslim-Migrant" identity.

Ayla, 24: Having grown up in Germany as the daughter in a family of Turkish *dede*-lineage, she knows much more details concerning Alevi symbolism and rituals than the average Alevi youngster. At the same time, she is quite critical of the Alevi migrant community, which she blames, firstly, for living in a self-chosen ghetto, and, secondly, for the obvious contrast between theory and practice when it comes to matters such as women's place in society and social tolerance. These fundamental points of criticism remained constant in the second interview as well. However, the events of September 11th and its aftermath seem to have exerted a strong influence upon her, and she was one of the few interviewees who explicitly expressed fear and a change of consciousness after September 11th. This may be connected to the fact that her husband, an Alevi-Kurdish student of engineering sciences, was affected by security measures in a police summons. While in the first interview, Ayla had opted for an individual, quietist religious practice, after the event she became a *religious,* and not just a cultural, Alevi. She decided to consolidate her own identity (as an "Alevi young woman who always wants to be part of the society") and go public. As the German public and colleagues seemed to perceive her as a (Sunni) Muslim, a "black head", she decided to take on the role of a spokesperson for the whole Muslim-Migrant community and enlighten the German-Christian population as to inner-Islamic differences, such as the existence of various opinions and stands on political and ethical questions. The attacks and their aftermath induced her to overcome inherited anti-Sunni prejudices, and broaden her general tolerance, as she traced the attacks back to the lack of communication between different groups in society. Concerning the Alevi (migrant) community, her hopes are that the community will overcome its self-chosen ghetto, open up to Germans as well as to Sunnis, and particularly overcome the Alevi identity of being a "subscriber" of grievance and pain: "Everything cheerful belongs to the Sunnis; everything sorrowful to us. Why do we always have to suffer so we can say we are Alevi?"

Murat, 38: Murat's mother is the offspring of a dede-lineage. His father is a devoted, practicing Alevi, and so Murat grew up, first in a small Turkish town, later in Germany, surrounded and shaped by Alevi values and rituals. The rituals of his childhood had to be practiced in secret, in Turkey as

well as in Germany, and as a child he was not allowed to talk about it in public. When the "Alevi Cultural Center" in his German hometown was founded, he became one of the first members. Today he is a member of the board of the local association, and delivers public talks on Alevilik. To him, Alevilik means tradition, action and conscience; the Alevi path began with the creation, and will not cease to exist. Thus, the Alevi history is different from this path, which, if it exists at all, is made up of the stories the dedes handed down. The historical suffering and struggle the Alevis experienced, shaped their identity decisively and eventually became its constitutive element. Alevilik is unequal to "Islam": Muslim means Sunni (Shi'i Islam does not appear in his talk), and Muslims may rely on the Quran for justifying aggression like jihad. The attacks first terrified him and made him think of another war to come. But than he overcame his fear and became even more active and outgoing than before. His explicit aim now is to strengthen contact and communication between the members and associations of all religions; he is ready to defend the average Muslim against German offences and prejudices, but draws a clear line between the Alevi community (and their values) and the Muslims. He is definitely neither German nor Muslim, but Alevi. Concerning the Sunni-Alevi relationship, he is one of the few interviewees who relates the September 11th attacks to the Sivas-incident in 1993. He is not willing to believe the regrets of Sunni spokespersons regarding the attacks, so long as they do not also make public apology for the Sivas-massacre.

Conclusion

The aim of this article is to shed light on the consideration that the Alevis in Germany might feel caught between a rock and a hard place after the attacks of September 11th, 2001. For this reason, the following questions were raised and discussed: 1. Did the historical consciousness of the lay Alevis in Germany undergo any changes as a consequence of the attacks? 2. If so, what kind of change could be observed? 3. Are there any recognisable differences between the perception of the attacks by Alevi spokespersons on the one hand, and Alevi laypersons on the other?

To analyze the nature of the (supposed) change in the Alevi historical consciousness, the above mentioned crisis-schema by Rüsen (normal, critical, catastrophic) has been applied to the empirical examples in question. If we look at the examples given above, we detect a critical crisis concerning the lay Alevis' historical consciousness. Their understanding of Alevi history as one

of suffering and humiliation remained, as did their self-image as modern, positive elements in society. But the identity of the victim and the quality of the enemy had changed. With respect to "victim identity", the identities of my interview partners were multi-faceted; they perceived themselves, with varying degrees of emphasis, as being Alevi, Muslim, migrant, Turkish/Kurdish/German, young man/young woman, etc. This kind of patchwork-identity is no exception in post-modern societies, and especially not in diaspora communities. But the remarkable feature of the cases at hand concerned the shift from an exclusively Alevi identity - one that is anti-Sunni, handed down by the elderly, and supported by the professionals - to a (Muslim-) migrant version. And while this change is not solely ascribable to the September 11th attacks, the comparison of first and second interview statements indicates that this trend definitely increased after their occurrence. The "enemy" in this strain of historical consciousness is no longer "the Sunnis"; nor is it "the Germans" either. It is the injurous and unexpectedly fierce utterances and actions directed against "Muslim terrorists in Germany" by a more or less vague "majority", as well as by tangible neighbors, classmates and policemen.

Facing this situation, realizing that their integration into the majority society can be obstructed by events that are geographically and ideologically thousands of miles away, some lay Alevis developed a new form of stigma-management. Their strategy is to overcome the traditional collective boundaries, imported to Germany by the elderly, and even to identify themselves as members of the Muslim world (which means as a rule the world oppressed and humiliated by US power politics). They go public, look for new allies, be they migrants or Germans, and aim to improve their social and economic position in Germany.

These interviews show a different approach to the attacks than that which is taught by professional Alevis, whose historical consciousness and identity remain the same, as the above mentioned examples of press releases show. In addition, Alevi spokespersons make use of the democracy-and-peace rhetoric, which is very successful in the German public discourse. They point to the parallel between the attacks in New York and in Sivas, a perception and interpretation that we saw only in Murat's statement, the statement of an "almost-professional".

There is no public discussion on the growing feelings of humiliation and inferiority, or the possible deterioration of German-Alevi relations and the

hindrance of integration. This discrepancy may be understood by the application of two concepts: that of "identity"; and that of Goffman's "professional" member of a stigmatized community. Concerning identity, we have to be aware of the difference between a "collective identity in the public discourse" and the individual identity of a group member. This remark seems almost banal; unfortunately it is usually the public(ized) identity of Alevi spokespersons that is perceived as the essential collective Alevi identity in scientific research, as well as in inner-Alevi discussions. The process of the social construction of individual and collective identity and the relationship between both is usually not scrutinized, the congruence between them being taken for granted.

The professional spokesperson of a stigmatized community seems particularly apt to develop a form of representation vis-à-vis the "other world" that shifts from the self-perception of the average group member step by step. Successfully mastering the discourse and the norms of his primary group, as well as those of "the others", the professional loses touch with the primary group itself. The successful Alevi spokespersons in Europe sell the most plain and comprehendible image to the hegemonic public; and as for established Alevi authors in Turkey, they are more or less convinced that their individual message matches the Alevi community's images and identities.

To put it succinctly: The lay Alevis in Germany are indeed caught between a rock and a hard place, but not between the old Sunni enemy and the modern self-image; rather they are caught between an ignorant majority society and a class of detached professional representatives. The experience of a critical crisis enabled them to change their social strategies, whereas the professionals' static historical consciousness persists.

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GYPSIES AND ALEVIS; THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF ABDALLAR IDENTITY?

Elin Strand and Adrian Marsh

Introduction

In this article, the emphasis is upon examining the notion of Alevi and *Romani* identities, operational concurrently within the same environment, in an ethnic equivalent of linguistic "code–switching". The question of whether this is possible in the context of Romani (*Gypsy*) groups and Alevis came to our attention during the Romani Studies Conference 2003 in Istanbul, entitled "Contextual, Contested and Constructed: *Gypsies* and the problem of identities". Much debate, at times heated, took place between scholars and researchers who argued that such a phenomenon is not possible, as Alevis are a closed group, hermetic and resistant to admittance except by birth. Others refuted this, and claimed that not only were there Alevi *Gypsy* groups present in parts of Turkey in the present, but that this was a historical situation dating from Ottoman, or possibly pre–Ottoman Anatolia. Representatives from the *Laz* and *Kurdish* communities also argued that multiple identities were to be found in their own groups, and that in the case of the latter, large numbers of Kurdish *Gypsies* existed in Eastern Anatolia for example. It is axiomatic that, in the context of discussing Romani identities, a similar "exclusivist" discourse has often been prevalent. Prompted by the Istanbul debates, the authors here describe the historical context of the formation of the Romani peoples and suggest the circumstances for the relationship existing between the two groups. The question of religious beliefs and practices amongst various Romani groups has occupied the attentions of many missionaries, anthropologists and "*Gypsy*–lorists" from the late eighteenth–century, but little has been written about those who profess Islam, orthodox or heterodox. In this case the challenge is both to present a comprehensible analysis of Romani ethnogenesis to scholars of Alevism and Alevi identity, and to argue why it is that groups of Romani peoples in Turkey (and possibly elsewhere) could claim to be Alevis. The normative functions of the arguments surrounding the question will be examined in the context of the notions of identities.

We refer to groups living in the environs of Istanbul, Gaziantep and Izmir. We have drawn from the research, as yet unpublished at the time of writing, by Ana Oprisan and Suat Kolukirik, conducted jointly amongst the *Teber–Abdals* of Izmir during 2002–2003, and the work of photo–journalist Stefan Bladh amongst Abdals in Istanbul during the same period. Oprisan and Kolukirik's ultimate conclusions were diametrically opposed, and we argue that these differences were epistemological in nature, embedded in the discourse of ethnography and social anthropology. The resolution to these differences lies in the ability to contextualise the problem of identity within the history of the Romani people. Bladh has been able to make no clear conclusions regarding the identity of the Istanbul–Gaziantep Abdal group, though Oprisan has concluded that these, like the Izmir groups are Romani. We present the evidence for this below.

The terminology adopted is that current in the discourse of Romani Studies. Thus the term *Romani* will be employed to denote the groups of peoples in the world who share linguistic and cultural traits and notions of a common Indian "ethnogenesis", i.e. *Rom*, *Dom* and *Lom* communities. In the particular context of Turkey the term *Çingene*, widely (and inappropriately) translated, as "*Gypsy*" will not be used as it carries many of the pejorative associations that are reflected in popular Turkish culture. The term "*Gypsy*" has been consciously reclaimed by Romani and non–Romani activists since the 1960's, in a similar fashion to other emancipation movements. Outside the UK and US, despite being frequently used in academic and political discourse, Romani communities have not universally accepted it. The authors argue that historically, the record of self–appellations is poor, and that on very few occasions is it possible to identify whether the groups referred to in the sources were Romani speakers, or spoke one of the other related languages (for example *Domari* or *Lomavren*). This being the case, the terms "*Gypsy*" and "*Gypsies*" will be used throughout. We acknowledge this problem of nomenclature by always capitalising and italicising them.

The term Romani will be used to describe the language of those peoples sharing an ethnonym derived from *Rom*, itself derived from *Rûmi* or Roman (i.e. Byzantine); *Romanlar* is the plural of the individual term *Roman* the self–appellation of many *Gypsies* in Turkey. *Romani* will also be deployed as a term to describe the wider community of *Roms*; *Dom* refers to the *Gypsy* peoples of the Middle East (often pejoratively labelled as *Ghagar*, *Nawar* and *Halebi* amongst others who speak *Domari*) and *Lom* to those of Armenia and Central Asia (the *Luri*, and *Poscha* in addition to other groups

who speak *Lomavren*). There are many terms to describe the differing groups of Turkish Romanlar, mostly derived from occupational designations under the Ottomans. In the interests of clarity, we shall refer to them individually only when necessary, after giving a brief description.

The similarities with the two groups will be highlighted in terms of their processes of social group and identity formation, their genesis and histories, some beliefs and practices and the discourse surrounding both Alevi and *Gypsy* identities, in particular as the "other".

We conclude that the historical processes of Romani ethnogenesis have produced a variety of related identities from a range of composite groups, amongst them Romani peoples who are Alevis. This is a largely undocumented phenomena, an unaccepted notion by some researchers in our experience, that demands further investigation by both Romani Studies and Alevi scholars in partnership, to produce more informative and illuminating evidence for any lasting conclusions.

Origins

The presence of Alevi *Gypsies* in the modern Turkish Republic is a phenomenon that is questioned upon occasion, by those who insist upon positivist notions of identity as primordial, innate and immutable. In their eyes, Alevi identity, unlike the Romanlar identity that is similar in some respects, is one that cannot be anything other than one based upon blood; one is born into the Alevi group and there is no other form of "admittance" (Melikoff 1998: 6). In this context, the very notion that an identity could encompass both Alevi and *Gypsy* elements is anathema. This is not necessarily the opinion of Alevi scholars generally, but is perhaps more familiar amongst the Alevi "grass roots". Such notions are not uncommon amongst elements of the Roma political movement, who insist upon criteria for membership that they argue demonstrates a greater degree of *Roma–ness* than those they would differentiate themselves from. The key commonality here is that of the hermetically sealed *ethnie*, traversing the centuries as sealed "[...] eternal entities, which are closed, by their nature to any kind of evolution"(Bozarslan 2003: 4). For Romani nationalists the link to India is paramount, and much scholarly, and less than scholarly effort and argument has been mobilised and formulated to demonstrate this irrefutable relationship between the past and present, as a "consensual discourse" amongst scholars,

activists and in what has been described by Alevi scholars as a kind of "feedback loop", amongst the Romani peoples themselves (Borzarslan 2003: 3).

In common with messianic peoples like the Jews and Armenians, the goal is often a "promised land", in this case *Romanistan*. Imaginatively, Romanistan has been located in north–western Multan, Rajasthan and the surrounding region, although there have been attempts to construct alternatives in modern history, most notably in Stalin's Soviet Union (Kalinin 2001). The notion of Romanestan has been mobilised by the Indian government at points, especially during the Ghandi regime of the 1970's, as part of the wider geopolitical concerns in the region. It has been suggested that there was a process of reverse colonisation, whereby groups of Indian peoples established themselves in Europe long before Europeans colonised India, an attractive proposition in the post–colonialist discourse. The support of the Indian government at that time (including the sponsorship of the first International Romani Union World Romani Congress in London), in the growth of what can be characterised as Romani *ethno–nationalism* is similar to the Egyptian recognition during the 1950's of a group in Macedonia and Kosovo claiming Egyptian identity (Duijzings 1997). Both examples illustrate differing aspects of the politics of state–sponsored ethno–nationalism, the claims by individual nation–states over extra–territorial ethnic elements defined as part of the nation in some fashion. Though the Indian government's championing of the Romani peoples has, to a greater extent become dormant from its heyday in the 1970's it remains as a potent, if latent symbol.

Those scholars of Romani Studies who would share something of the *primordialist* approach are to be found insisting upon an entirely Indian *ethno–genesis* for the *Gypsies*, whom it is argued migrated from the sub–continent between 500 and 1000 CE, or thereabouts. The shift in Romani historiography from notions of *mono–genesis* to the "late origin" theory has meant a major restructuring of the "story" or trajectory of Romani history and a much closer inspection of the historical record and linguistic "evidence", to deduce probable and possible developments (Acton 2003). The three major *Gypsy* groups are, contrary to much accepted scholarship, likely to have left at differing times, with the earlier migrations from the *Sindh* or north–western India as a result of the Muslim Arab incursions and invasions in the early 8th century CE. These groups maintain a linguistic structure (derived from *Old Indo–Aryan*), which allows scholars to date their departure to this time

(Hancock 2003). Their modern descendants can be found throughout the Middle East and south-eastern Anatolia mostly speaking *Domari* (within their communities), and they are known by a variety of pejorative epithets including *Ghagar, Nawar, Halebi* in Egypt, Israel and Syria. The predominant self–appellation amongst these communities is *Dom.*

The other two major groups are likely to have been captives from the successive *razzias* of the *Ghaznâvid* Sultan, Mahmûd b. Sebüktigin (or Mahmüd–i Zabulî, 971–1030 CE). His vast territories, centred upon *Ghaznâ*, stretched from north–central India to Khorasan in an empire not previously seen since after the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate at its apogee. Hundreds of thousands of Indian prisoners, many of them crafts people, musicians, entertainers and the remnants of the armies defeated by Ghaznâvid forces on almost every occasion were deported to the capital over the years 997–1027 CE. The aim of the raids was two–fold; to capture booty, plunder and prisoners to maintain the multi–ethnic, professional standing army and central bureaucracy of the state, and to reduce the religious enemies of Islam. These were the Hindus, described in detail by the scholar al–Bîrûnî (940 – c.1048CE), in his *magnum opus*, "Description of India" (1030), and the *Shî'î* rulers of *Sindh* (Sachau 1910, Bosworth 1991: 65–66). Mahmûd's successful reduction of the Sindhi principalities brought many *Shî'î* and Hindu Indians into the Ghaznâvid forces, in the usual incorporation of conquered ethnic elements into the armies of Islam (Crone 2003: 286). This process had been in place since the *Sufyânid* period, when regiments of Berbers (*Waddâhiyya*), Iranians (*Bukhâriyya*) and Sindhi Indians (*Oîqâniyya*) appeared as *mawâlî* (client) troops (Crone 2003: 285). This organisational model was not dissimilar to the one that pertained in the early mediaeval armies of Bedouin *amîr* Hasan al–Makzûn al–Sinjârî, whose defence of *Nusaryriyya* (Syrian Alawites) took place in 1220 and 1223 CE (EI^2: 146a). From these Nusayriyya contingents the tribes of *Matâwira, Mahâliba, Darâwisa, Numaylâtiyya* and *Banû 'Alî* emerged in the region (Halm 1995: 146a). The nature of the relationship between Alawites and Alevis is one where both claim autochthonous origins in separate ethno–cultural matrices (Arab and Bedouin on the one hand, Turkish and Kurdish on the other), and we do not intend to suggest a direct relationship here (see Aringberg–Laanatza 1998 for the similarities and differences between Alawites and Alevis). It is the process of "tribal" formation in the Islamic military context that is highlighted by our example.

In the multi–ethnic Ghaznâvid bureaucracy and army, the mawâlî troops learnt to speak a *koiné*, a military "command" language, comprised of predominantly New Indo–Aryan Indic and Persian, some Turkish and Arabic. The rationale of such is obvious; in formation movement and battle, the need for all parts of the army to understand commands quickly and respond was essential. From this *lingua franca* would emerge two forms, a western and eastern or what would eventually crystallise as *Romani* and *Urdu*, in the 13th century. The separated trajectory was a result of the defeat of the Ghaznâvid Sultan Mas'ûd at Dandânqân, by the Saldjûks in 1040. Mas'ûd returned to India and retained the territory east of Ghaznâ (but was deposed almost immediately), however, the western portion of the empire was lost forever. This is the date when the initial wave of *Turcoman* nomads found Khorasan and eastern Anatolia open to them, the beginnings of the radical shift in ethnicity that would alter the previous two thousand year predominance of the Greeks, Armenians and the Kurds, of *Asia Minor* (see Vryonis 1971: 143–145). Ahead of the Turcomans went the remnants of the defeated, predominantly Indian Ghaznâvid mawâlî who avoided capture, some of the ancestors of the Romani peoples. Their sojourn in the Armenian lands was ended by the Saldjûk victory at Ani in 1064, and the incorporation of the remaining Bagratid Kingdom of Kars by the Byzantines in its aftermath. The Byzantine debacle at Manzikert (1071 CE) pushed the proto–Romani peoples further west, into Asia Minor and imperial territory. By this time, we may assume that the Indian genetic "core" was complemented by an admixture of Persians, Khwarizmians, Armenians, Greeks, Arabs and others, both from the Ghaznâvid period and from contact on their migration after the Dandânqân defeat. Most importantly for our discussion here, Hancock notes "two salient aspects of the contemporary Romani condition" when he states that

> [...] the population has been a composite one from the very beginning, and [...] that while their earliest components originated in India, Romanies are essentially a population which acquired its identity in the [Byzantine] West (Hancock 2002: 5).

The "path" of their migration over a period c.1040 – c.1100 CE took them from Ghaznâ to Dandânqân in the armies of Mas'ûd, from here along the traditional "silk roads" of the southern Caspian (*Bahr al–Khazar*) through Ismâ'îlî territory and into Adharbayjan and the lands of Armîniya. Once the Saldjûks had reduced the nominally independent principalities of the remaining Bagratid princes (the Byzantines having succeeded in annexing Ani and the greater part of the Bagratid domains after 1045 CE), the proto–Romani peoples moved further westward and southward, possibly and partly perhaps as

a result of forced migration on the part of the Byzantines, who also "recompensed" the Bagratid prince of Ani, Gagik II and many Armenians with lands in Cappadocia. The earliest reliable reference to *Gypsies* as *Aiguptissa* and *Atsinganoi* comes from Byzantine clerical sources, such as Theodore of Balsomon in the later 11th century in Constantinople (Soulis 1961: 143). The ethnonym *Rom* would appear to derive from the notion of being from Rûm, i.e. *Byzantium*, and is recorded in Modon in the 1340's by pilgrims returning from the Holy Lands, in the form *Romîtî* (Manzi 1818).

We have no indication that any Indic troops may have been captured at Dandânqân by the Saldjûks, or of their incorporation into the armies as mawâlî or otherwise. Traditional *Rajpût* battle-practice would have meant the almost complete destruction of the Hindû warriors in defence of their general. In the eventual collapse of Saldjûk authority on the borderlands of Anatolia, any that were captives and soldiers pressed into service, may have found themselves moving into quondam imperial territories with others. What we wish to suggest here is that the path of migration for the ancestors of Romani populations in Anatolia began in, amongst other places the *Shî'î* Muslim principalities of north-western India, moved through the regions most clearly associated with the origins of Turkish *Sufism* and Alevism (Trans Oxiana and Khorâsân), and the territories of Kurdish Alevism, and later established contacts with groups of Alevi Turcomans in a relationship that was still in existence in the early 1920's (Halliday 1922). Religiously heterodox, even in the context of early Islam, the appeal to these groups (as to many) of the wandering dervishes' message of tolerant inclusion and *sufism* would have made particular sense of their lives. The influences of *sufi* mysticism amongst Romani groups has never been described by ethnographers or anthropologists, much less researched by historians. The few allusions to anything resembling a connection come from ethno-musicology, where aspects of *Gypsy* dance are related to Central Asian *shamanism* (Seeman 2002). Delivered in the form of the mystical syncretism of Hacı Bektaş Veli and Mevlana Celaladdin Rûmi, together with the dervishes, this corpus of *lore* was at the heart of Anatolian Islam and the differing threads it acquired, including Alevism and syncretic beliefs drawn from Christianity, Zoroastrianism and elsewhere. The importance of "fortune-telling" as an occupation much identified with the later, *Atsinganoi* and *Aiguptissa,* is easy to understand in the range of services offered by these commercial nomads to the sedentary, fearful populations they encountered.

The *mentalité* of 11th and 12th century Anatolian populations must have been deeply affected by the insecurity of their daily lives. Subject to predation and raiding by bands of *Turcomans*, the increasing collapse of central Byzantine authority left the population vulnerable to subjection by any rising warlord or bandit chieftain. The concern with death and disorder, visible in the images of Mehmed Siyah Kalem and the poetry of Yûnus Emre, encapsulate the milieu in which early Romani populations plied their trades, in common with the dervishes offering solace, sellers of relics and artefacts associated with both Muslim and Christian saints and prophets, and Orthodox monks and *sufis* seeking spiritual security in the chaos and disorder of early mediaeval Anatolia. Wanderers and refugees from the calamities of warfare and persecution, ruination through excessive taxation, the ravages of disease and the predation of bandits and warlords, abounded on the roads and pathways of the region during this period, many of whom may have made the choice to join stronger groups offering protection, economic opportunity and companionship.

Here then, is not only the "origin of the *Gypsies*", that historical moment when the group evolves distinctly from the variety that typified its make–up previously. "Forged" between the hammer of the Saldjûks and Turcomans and the anvil of the Byzantines, they were annealed and melded in the social and spiritual cauldron of early mediaeval Anatolia. Here is the milieu in which Alevi *Gypsies* are all too likely to have eventually emerged.

Social Formation

The complex process of the formation of different *Gypsy* peoples is a topic that is in its entirety, beyond the scope of this piece; however, it is important to note that both *ethnogenesis* and social construction have been at work in the development of *Gypsy* identity. It is also the underlying position of the authors that proto–Romani peoples, as Hancock describes them are populations that acquired their identities in the late Byzantine and, we would further argue, early Ottoman periods (Hancock 2003). The social organisation of *Gypsy* groups under the guild system of the Byzantines, which was fully developed by the Ottomans who inherited it, through the ascription of occupational tax categories to particular groups, is the basis for *ethnic* and "tribal" Romani identities in much of the region. This process however, is not one that was exclusive to *Gypsies*, but also applied to others, particularly those groups defined in ethno–religious terms (Makdisi 2002: 3). The process

of social formation is the main point here; as has been suggested elsewhere with regard to nomadic or "tribal" units, the existence of sophisticated state machinery demands the development of structures and strategies that could deal with this amongst the former (Wells c.1999: 56). These may originally be imposed, as in the case of the Indian mawâlî regiments of the Ghaznâvid army. In the context of early *Gypsy* groups in the Byzantine Empire, the need for the organisation of the individual, commercially nomadic units into "clan" or "tribal" groups of cohesive, tax–paying and accountable communities was driven by the state. The response of these groups was to conform to the model presented in order to achieve maximum flexibility in economic and social relations. Fundamentally, loose associations of travelling peoples of various origins, bound by the need for security and developing particular economic specialisations accepted the definitions of "tribes" and the pre–existent identity of *Gypsy* in order to continue exploiting the available niches in the market.

We may suggest here that the particular experience of the Ottoman fiscal system has had a profound impact upon the *Gypsies* of Turkey. The common divisions into *Sepetçi*, *Balamoron*, *Kipti*, *Mirti*, *Kocer* and *Arabci* are clearly the result of categorisation for tax purposes often linked to occupation (i.e. *arabci* as carriage–drivers, *mirti* as employees of the Ottoman state, *balamoron* as wax–chandlers, etc; see Oprisan 2002), or notions of origin (*kipti* as Egyptians originally from the Middle East, i.e. Coptic Dom; *çingene* as peripatetics from the east, i.e. China). This complex nomenclature is reflective of the late Byzantine and early Ottoman taxation systems that spawned it. It also reflects the differing descriptions of Roms, Doms and Loms (those who speak *Romani*, *Domari* and *Lomavren*) in various contexts. Historically, any groups that displayed some or all of the perceived characteristics of "*Gypsies*" found themselves labelled as such. This conflation led 19th century Ottoman enumerators to register numbers of *Tahtacı* and *Abdallar* as "*Gypsies*" in 1831 population records for Içel *sancak* (Karpat 1985: 112, 115, n.ii). The descendants of *Alawites* banished from Anatolia to Cyprus in 1712 and *Tahtacı* conscripted into the modernised Ottoman forces in the 19th century, defined themselves as *Kipti* (Hatay 2003). Our own research suggests this was in order to avoid serving with Sunni recruits (Marsh & Strand 2003). This would indicate that Ottoman identification had some basis in self–ascription amongst these communities, and existing association or relationship between them.

Identity

One of the clearest similarities in the historical experience of both Alevis and *Gypsies* is that of marginalisation and discrimination. The consistent identification of the Byzantine and Ottoman *Gypsy* populations as the "other", associated in the former with magical practices and sorcery, and in the latter with heterodoxy and poor adherence to the tenets of Islam, has marked the experience of the Romani peoples in the region. In the modern context, Irish Travellers and New Age Travellers in Britain, the *Yenische* of Germany, the *Resande* of Scandinavia and the *Zabaleen* of Egypt are all examples of this. They may be said to share characteristics of commercial peripateticism, generational mobility, an alternative religious identity to the wider population, occupational marginalisation and what might be termed as a "counter–culture"; i.e. the perceived disregard for the normative behaviour of the surrounding community. These labels are of course, contested by the groups themselves, and the perceptions that establish such definitions are a source of disputes between the *Gypsies* and non–*Gypsies* (*gadje* in Romani), in the wider social and political context. In modern Turkey, the Abdallar we refer to here are, we argue examples of this perception.

The crucial factor of mobility is welded to that of *Gypsy* in the discourse of identity, where the normative opposition is *Gypsy*/non–*Gypsy* and mobile/settled. In fusing these elements into an identity underpinned by what is almost universally referred to as "a history of persecution", the normative function becomes clearer. The *Gypsies* are descendants of nomadic people, excluded by non–nomadic people in the process of formation and caught within a binary opposition that inter–weaves the fear and fascination of mobile people by those who have settled, the xenophobia of homogeneous groups for the "alien", the terror of the civilised while inventing the barbarians (Hall 1989) and, like the Sunni/Alevi opposition, the horror of the orthodox for the heretic. As suggested earlier, by extension all commercially nomadic groups can effectively be perceived as *Gypsies* by non–*Gypsies*. The construction of Romani "consciousness" has had to negotiate this "imaginary *Gypsy*" (Willems 1998), before embarking upon a process of "self–fashioning" (Greenblatt 1980), in opposition to it. The re–construction (or "construction") of Romani identity has meant an incorporation of others as a survival strategy, a mechanism to ensure maximum flexibility in social negotiations. In a similar fashion to the Alevi desire to maintain outward "boundaries" around the community, the Romani peoples have often resorted to presenting an identity that emphasises their *non–Romani–ness*. In effect,

they have frequently chosen to "pass" as others to avoid persecution, prejudice and not infrequently, destruction.

The Teber–Abdal group is a peripatetic or semi–nomadic group moving through a regular pattern of movements to the south of Turkey every summer, and back to Izmir–Bornova during the winter months (Kolukirik 2003). They describe their original migration to Izmir as a *narrative of journey* passing through Khorasan–Erzurum–Eskisehir–Alasehir (Kolukirik 2003), the associations of which are redolent with meaning for Alevism. The Istanbul Abdallar describe themselves as originating in Gaziantep, in southern Anatolia (Bladh 2003). The former live in what might be described as insecure housing, or "shanty town" dwellings on the periphery of the community with a current population of about two hundred and fifty or three hundred persons. The latter "reside" under a series of motorway flyovers on the outskirts of Istanbul, close to other *Roman* (*Gypsy*) communities and would appear to be one extended kinship group. The Teber–Abdals have been "resident" in Mevlana quarter or *mahalle* for almost three years since arriving in early 2000, whilst the Istanbul Abdals have been returning to their "site" for a similar period. Occupationally, this group engages in selling perfumes and low–priced colognes, flowers, building and labouring, scrap–collecting, shoe cleaning and itinerant begging. The more traditional occupations associated with music and performing are also part of these groups' activities. As Alevi Muslims, the Tebers are additionally engaged in selling religious literature, a factor that suggests levels of literacy higher than that usually found in *Gypsy* communities in Turkey. Crucially for those living in the environs of the Mevlana mahalle, these groups are labelled as *Gypsy* by their neighbours, as are the Istanbul group by the authorities. The former however, define themselves as Teber–Abdal, a primary definition that is clearly at odds with the ascription of the wider community, and the question of language is contested (Kolukirik 2003, Oprisan 2003). Kolukirik presents a table of terms, comparing the responses to various items, where only the group from Tarlabashı close by, who acknowledge themselves as *Gypsies*, offer identifiable Romani words. Oprisan argues that these groups do, in fact know some Romani and represent the frequent phenomenon of *Gypsy* groups losing their language, similar to the *Ghurbeti* and *Mandi* in Cyprus who largely speak Turkish and Greek respectively these days. The Istanbul Abdals also refute the notion that they are *Gypsies*, but speak *Romance* (Turkish Romani), they say for business purposes (Bladh 2003). We would suggest that in the case of both groups, an ascription reliant purely upon a single criteria (i.e. language), is flawed, and that both these groups are Alevi and *Gypsy*,

though choosing to "pass" as non–*Gypsies*, as is clearly their right to do (see Council of Europe 1995: art.3).

Religiosity

It is axiomatic amongst *Gypsy*–lorists and older scholarship in Romani Studies that "religion sits lightly upon the *Gypsy*", a statement that implies an indifference to religion in general. It is often argued that where the phenomena of "crypto–religion" (Malcolm 2001: 91) or *syncretism* existed in the Ottoman past and subsequently survives in the successor states of the Balkans and in Anatolia, *Gypsies* represent something fundamentally different. This detachment is a means of reinforcing the notions of separation from the normative social behaviour of the surrounding communities and emphasising the "counter–cultural" element of *Gypsy* communities, a way of anthropologists positing them as *objects* in the "there and then", as opposed to the scholarly "here and now" (Fabian 1983: 21). For *Gypsies*, the *marimé* pollution codes are a means of separating them from the surrounding *mochadi* or "unclean" gadjé, in many ways analogous to the cleanliness taboos existing amongst Judaic or other Indian groups. These cleanliness taboos, sometimes interpreted as expression of *Gypsy* religiosity, are not in opposition to or in place of affiliation to organised religions. More accurately, they are in accordance with other religious traditions. Notions of pure and impure food, ways of preparing meals, rules regarding matrimony and regulating the degree of proximity to the community exist in many religions. The traditional Islamic division between *halal* (pure) and *haram* (impure) is similar to the way *Gypsies* distinguish between clean (private) and unclean (public, *marimé*). An untested yet interesting hypothesis is the possible link between the Turkish notions of intimacy and privacy, incorporating an idea of secrecy (*mahremiyet*), with the Romani concept of *marimé*. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore this further, this may suggest a closer connection between the two cultures than hitherto has been suggested. What is clear is that these *Gypsy* "purity codes" are not only compatible with, but reinforce existing religious practices and rituals. Pentecostal *Gypsies* in Europe, for instance, would argue that they are not only "better *Gypsies* for being Christians, but better Christians because they are *Gypsies*" (Acton 1979: 291, Gay y Blasco 1999: 10, Strand 2001).

The example of the Abdallar groups who insist upon their religious identity and deny any existence of aspects of a *Gypsy* identity, despite

familiarity with Romani and an awareness of these pollution taboos suggests that there is another possibility for the expression of these practices (Kolukirik 2003). In the context of the close correlation between religious and ethnic identity in the late Ottoman period and early Republic, changing one's religion can be seen as coterminous with adopting or adapting to a new *ethnic* identity. In the search for what might be termed a *macro–identity* i.e. one that reflects and allows the Romanlar to be admitted to the wider society, there is a need to explain the existence of certain rituals within the community. This can be through the development of a heterodox Muslim identity that allows the members of the group to be accepted as part of a larger or meta–group, whilst still maintaining essential practices to define cultural boundary markers. In this way, the two groups allow for the possible interpretations that currently are applied A group that maintains certain practices and linguistic elements drawn from Romani, yet denies that they are in any way *Gypsy* confirms the argument that only an Alevi identity is possible (Kolukirik 2003). The Istanbul–Abdals from Gaziantep would refute that they in any way are *Gypsies*, but the extent to which they are familiar with *Romance*, is explained in pragmatic terms, stressing their use of it as a means of facilitating business. Our contention is the fact that *Romance* is a *créole* of Turkish with Romani words and Turkish syntax and grammar (in a similar way to English *Romani–chib* and Swedish *Rommani*). If we investigate the Abdals' explanations for their language acquisition, it is clear that Turkish would be the more convenient *lingua franca*. Furthermore, *Romance* is not a language that is taught; one learns it within the group, acquiring full use through socialization at a later stage, almost as a *rite de passage*. In contradistinction to many *Romanlar* in Istanbul who assert a complex of identities as Turkish/Sunni Muslim/Roman, in that order, the Abdallar stress their primarily religious identity. However, wedding rituals amongst the Abdallar groups bear strong resemblance to Romani weddings elsewhere (Bladh 2003, Kolukirik 2003). We suggest that the reason for attempting to "pass" is an "avoidance" strategy, allowing maximum flexibility in negotiating with the wider community, common to most *Gypsy* groups. Conversely, there are situations where groups are able to claim both an Alevi identity and a Romani one. The case of Teketo in Bulgaria, discussed below, is an example. The contested point between these positions is what establishes the boundary, both for the groups and community around them. The emphasis on language as the defining factor in these boundaries, at the expense of the context in which they are drawn is one that will result in simple binary opposition that fails to take into account this complexity.

Margarita Karamihova's research on the hitherto very rare subject of Alevi – *Gypsy* relations, is based on her fieldwork at the *Tekke* of Osman Boba in the Bulgarian village Teketo. The study pinpoints the complexities surrounding ethnographic and epistemological problems. Karamihova's arguments are also interesting as they clearly reflect – or reveal – a series of hierarchical value judgements. In this instance, it is that of the superiority of an Alevi identity over a *Gypsy* identity. The *Gypsies* in this study are from the nearby *mahalle* of Stolipinovo, in the Izgrev neighbourhood of Plovdiv. Some of these regular pilgrims to this Alevi shrine prefer to initially identify themselves as ethnic Turks, later "admitting" to being *Gypsies*. In Stolipinovo, other individuals self–identify as *Romi* (Karamihova 2003). Religiously, the pilgrims adhere to Alevism, but despite the author's own evidence that supports the existence of multiple ethno–religious identities (i.e. ethnic Turk/*Romi*/Alevi in Bulgaria), her conclusion is one that echoes the stereotypical depiction of *Gypsies* as non–authentic religious practitioners. The Alevi *Gypsies* are stripped of any genuine religiosity and are described as a "demographic threat" to the Alevi pilgrims and hosts, at the holy place (Karamihova 2003). Not only are their ways of worshipping being portrayed as violating the "rules of worship at the holy place", but the *Gypsies* are also deprived of any spiritual or historical awareness:

> The communication of sacrifice has been destroyed through ignoring the local cultural practice and practitioners [...] The new group, alien to the Alevi in both ethnic and confessional terms, is interested neither in Bektashism [sic] nor the history of, nor the rules of worship at the holy place[...] (Karamihova 2003).

In explaining the background for the increasing number of *Gypsies* that visit the holy place, i.e. the right to profess to various religious beliefs after 1989, Karamihova notes that "the *Gypsies* seemed to outnumber the Turks (Alevis and Sunnis)", and that the *Gypsy* visitors constituted "a massive invasion", in an unconscious reflection of the language of European exclusion of the "*Gypsy* hordes" (*Daily Express*, late January and early February 2004). It seems clear to the authors that Karamihova firstly disassociates *Gypsies* from the Turks and secondly, establishes the "fact" that *Gypsy* Alevism, in her own words, is a "travesty" of the "true" Alevi tradition (*ibid.*). The conclusion is one that, again, would support the "either–or debate" and the "true or false dichotomy". Yet, there is in the field of Romani Studies a corpus of comparative material showing the possibility of intertwined ethno–religious identities. Not only was it a novelty even for experienced scholars at the Istanbul Romani Studies conference 2003 to learn about the

existence of Kurdish *Gypsies*, *Quereçi (Qerec, Poshe)*, but the paper on Jewish *Gypsies* in Israel was of particular interest (Novoselsky 2003). The fact that a group of the latter have converted to Pentecostalism may complicate and challenge ethnographers' desires to categorise clearly. It is likely that Marushiakova and Popov, amongst the leading Romani Studies scholars and certainly the most eminent experts of Romani Studies in Bulgaria, would disagree with Karamihova's arguments. Explaining the wide spread dismissal of *Gypsy* religiosity, they argue that such a perception is based on an ethnocentric understanding that fails to view religious syncretism other than as a deviation from a normative religious model (in this case, the "local cultural practice").

The anthropologist David Shankland has pointed out the unfruitfulness of claiming any "true" form of Alevism (Shankland 1998). In this instance, *Alevi–ness* and *Gypsy–ness* share similar components stemming from the ways in which they have had to accommodate to the dominant majority society; how their religiosity continually is being questioned by the normative organised religion, the shared history of persecution, the extent to which admittance to the group is exclusive rather than inclusive, a certain level of secrecy and "suspicion" of non–members (as a result of the former), and syncretic religious practices (as a result of the factors mentioned). Shankland illustrates the syncretism in a village by describing how villagers employ both orthodox Muslim and Alevi rituals for the same funeral, explaining that "this overlapping of different ritual cycles and different layers of belief within Alevi life are profound" (ibid.). The same kind of overlapping holds true for *Gypsies*; it is quite common for Bulgarian *Gypsies* to use the services of both the imam and the priest, for example. (Marushiakova and Popov 1999).

The adherence to a non–orthodox religious branch is a distinctive feature for Alevis and for a large number of Romani Pentecostals in the world[1]. The social processes at work within the *Gypsy* Pentecostal movement (GPM) show some similar patterns as that of the Alevi movement; the overlap between the political and religious spheres, the emphasis on the oral rather than written tradition, "heart and soul" above dogma, and expressions of

[1]The number of *Gypsy* Catholics that have converted to Pentecostalism is huge, a fact that has not escaped the Vatican. The traditional close connection between Catholicism and the nation–state has had an exclusionary effect on people like the *Gypsies*. As a response to these inroads, the Pope John Paul II officially highlighted the situation of the *Gypsies* in his papal encyclical of 1991, in which he described the Roma as a "minority ethnic group which knows no territorial limits ...a minority paradigmatic in its transnational dimensions ...diverse in race, language and religion" (Woytyla 1991 cited in Acton 1999: 156).

resistance to cultural assimilation. Above all, they are considered as indigenous movements. The differences between these religious movements are indeed greater than the similarities, not least, as the GPM is an evangelising Church. The point we wish to make here is the exclusionary effects of the connection between orthodox religion and nation–state (Sunni Islam and Turkey, Roman Catholicism and Italy in this case) on these minorities. Attempts have been made by representatives of the dominant religions to reduce the theological distance between the majority group and minority group by drawing attention to central religious *personae* that unite them; Hasan Mahdi Shirazi argues "[...] the words Alawi and Shiah [sic] are interchangeable" (Eliade 1987). Giovanni Paolo II has in an encyclical highlighted the trans–nationality of the Romani people and called upon Mary, "Queen of the *Gypsies*" to protect them (Woytyla cited in Acton 1991). Alevi and *Gypsy* peoples have to this extent received official recognition of their spiritual "status", here by evoking Imam Ali and the Mother of Christ.

Conclusion

In this way the construction of these identities is to be seen as part of a continuous historical process at work upon these communities. The shift during the late Ottoman period from confessional communities to ethnic or national groups was part of the developments of the *millet* system, both in response to increasing pressure from the governments of countries which claimed rights of protection over sections of the Empire's non–Muslim populations, and the adoption of demographic practices allowing the Ottoman government to establish the diversity and extent of its peoples. Categorisation of groups was a process that remains unclear; certainly modern ethnography would dispute the designations applied to some groups (as suggested above). Latterly, *Gypsy* incorporation into wider demographic categories pushed them into close proximity with other, marginalised and nomadic sections of the Ottoman population. Thus, the censuses of the nineteenth century did include *Tahtacılar* and Alevis together with Anatolian Romanlar (Karpat 1985: 115, nii), for reasons suggested above. Religious exclusion and social marginalisation combined with commercial nomadism or occupational specificity to produce the Ottoman–Turkish *Gypsy* identity. The inheritance of a créole derived from New Indo–Aryan, Greek, Persian and incorporated into Turkish also provided a component to this, although one less stable in the long term. The historical presence in Anatolia of heterodox Muslim *Gypsies* may have been, we argue, very long–standing indeed, as may the association

of the ancestors of them with heterodox forms of Islam. The association between Alevis and *Gypsies* is one that has a complex and hitherto little–documented past. The modern presence of Alevism in *Gypsy* groups is part of the complex picture of religiosity amongst *Gypsy* groups in the Balkans, Turkey and the Middle East. In the continuum of Romani identities (as with others), the emphasis placed upon *one* aspect of identity over others is contingent upon the socio–cultural matrix it is located within. The assertion of this aspect does not preclude the existence, and assertion of others in a different context.

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